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THE LABOURING MINER IN CORNWALL c.1740-1870
A STUDY IN SOCIAL HISTORY

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This study was undertaken at the Centre for the Study of Social History, under the supervision of Mr. E.P. Thompson. The graphs and histograms were drawn by my wife, Ann Rule, to my specification.

Footnotes adding information or explanation have been placed at the bottom of the relevant pages; the related place in the text being indicated by an asterisk (*). References have been placed at the ends of chapters and indicated in the text by numbers. These references can be located from the Contents pages.

Parliamentary Papers have been referred to simply by the year of their printing e.g. P.P. 1842. The full titles and volume numbers of those consulted appear in the Bibliography.

Mr. C.J. Hunt's The Lead Miners of the Northern Pennines (Manchester University Press 1970) appeared too late to be made use of in this study. It affords useful comparative information on several aspects of mining life considered in this thesis.

J.G. Rule 4th January 1971.

Preface

The historian of the Cornish miner owes a debt to two well established works: Dr. John Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution (Liverpool 1953), and Mr. A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, The Cornish Miner (1927). The existence of these works perhaps makes it necessary to offer some justification for a further study. Dr. Rowe's book concentrates on the economic history of the period, and while it offers several perceptive insights into the social history of the miner, social history is not its main concern. In the introduction to the book, the need for another volume directed towards the social history of the period is recognised.

The Cornish Miner was first published in 1927, and covers the history of the miner from early medieval times to the twentieth century in some 300 pages. Good as the work is, there seems to be room for a more detailed social history of the miner during the crucial period of the Industrial Revolution. In particular does there seem to be this need, because the Cornish miners afford an excellent opportunity for case study of areas of relevance to current research in British social history, viz. Methodism and the Working class, and Crowd behaviour. In addition the tribute system of wage payment which exercised a considerable degree of influence over nineteenth century writers on labour affairs, is studied in depth here for the first time.

Labour historians have paid much attention to regional/occupational groups with a history of trade union and radical activity, here attention is turned to a group characterised by a low level of trade union and radical response.

Abstract

This study is concerned with the working and community life of the labouring miner in Cornwall from the seventeen-forties, to the collapse of the copper industry in the late eighteen-sixties. These were the years when copper mining dominated the county's economy. Production began to overhaul that of tin in the 1740's and reached its peak in the quinquennium 1855-60. The rapid rise of this great industry, with the advances in technology and industrial organization which it entailed, makes its story the story of the Industrial Revolution in Cornwall. This study is concerned with the social history of that period of transformation.

The first section is a statistical and historical introduction, providing data on the growth of the industry, the size and nature of its labour force, population, and the organization of the industry.

Section 2 is concerned with the miner at work. The working conditions in the mines are described, as is the extent and nature of child labour. The system of wage payment is examined in detail as are the changes in hours of work and the rhythm of labour consequent upon the increasing capitalisation of the industry.

A third section is concerned with the material conditions of the miner's life; his standards of housing and diet, and considers the family as an economic unit.

Section 4 is concerned with popular disturbances and the collective action patterns of the Cornish crowd. The miners were notorious for the frequency and determination with which they used direct action to secure collectively desired ends. Food rioting was the most frequent of such direct action forms, and the incidence, character and effectiveness of the food riot are considered in detail. Other forms of crowd action are then examined.

Section 5 is concerned with community life in the mining villages. After a placement of the mining community in its geographical and social

setting, attention is turned to Methodism. Methodism's introduction to the county practically co-incided with the beginning of the period under consideration. Thereafter its rise was rapid and its influence considerable. Its growth is outlined, the character of village Methodism analysed and the phenomenon of recurrent revivalism examined. Particular aspects of community life are then considered in turn, viz. patterns of recreation, education, and smuggling and wrecking, the last being examples of forms of behaviour which were in conflict both with the law, and with the prevailing moral teaching of Methodism.

A final section is concerned with the impact of trade-unionism and political radicalism on the miners. It is a concluding examination in which the lack of social, industrial, and political militancy among the miners is examined in the light of the industrial and social organisation of the region, the strength and influence of Methodism and the effect of the tribute system. The period was one of transformation, this final section looks at the problem of why the absence of forms of conflict usually associated with a period of rapid industrialisation was so marked.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL

The Development of the Mining Industry

The origins of Cornish mining reach beyond the beginnings of recorded history. Tin mining was an established industry in Medieval England: an important source of export earnings, and one which was highly regarded and favoured by the crown. In a sadly diminished condition it survives into the present day, and is even offering some promise of revival.

This study is concerned with the most spectacular growth period of that long history: the period from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The long record of continuous production which the Cornish mining industry presents, makes the validity of applying such a term as "industrial revolution", somewhat questionable. Dr. John Rowe's economic researches fully justify the use of the term. Dr. Rowe remarks:

> "Change had been in the air long before, but in the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, there began a period of revolutionary transformation in the economic and social life of Cornwall."(1)

The basis of this transformation was the exploitation of copper ores, which unlike that of tin ores was one of concentrated development. After a period of relatively successful exploitation under the Society of Mines Royal in the latter half of the sixteenth century, copper mining became in the course of the seventeenth century, almost moribund. Towards the end of that century it began again to revive, and thereafter quickened its pace of development to become the major prop of the county's economy by the mid-eighteenth century. (2) Virtually unknown before 1700, and virtually extinct by 1900, in the intervening years copper production far surpassed tin in terms of value and tonnage.

If copper had merely replaced tin as the primary product of the Cornish mining industry, then there would be little justification in talking of a revolutionary transformation, on the assumption that the same techniques were

as applicable to copper mining as they were to tin mining.* In fact the exploitation of copper ores depended on advances in technology and in industrial organisation which amounted to a significant departure from the techniques which had previously sufficed for tin mining. The copper lodes lay deeper and were accordingly more expensive to work. Little copper was found within forty fathoms of the surface. Consequently the economic exploitation depended on those advances in technology which could make deep mining profitable, or even possible. Especially significant was the development of the steam pumping engine. Steam engines were costly both to install and to run, and led to changes in industrial organisation, necessary to provide the larger scale enterprises which alone could make heavy capital investment worthwhile.

Following Dr. Rowe, we can place the beginning of the Cornish industrial revolution in the seventeen-forties. By 1740 the contribution of copper to the Cornish economy was more valuable than that of pilchards and was rapidly overhauling that of tin. Between 1740 and 1775, the number of mines producing copper more than trebled, whilst the average yearly ore production taken over five year periods increased from 6,500 tons 1740-5 to 28,750 tons 1770-5. (3)

The major copper mines at this time were concentrated in a small area; all the major centres being within eight miles of the summit of Carn Brea. Tin production largely continued in the regions of St. Just, St. Agnes, St. Austell and Breage. By 1838 there were estimated to be more than 28,000 labourers in the mines, of whom the vast majority were employed in the copper mines. (4)

The average annual output of copper ore reached 40,240 tons in 1790-5, and rose steadily to exceed 100,000 tons in 1820-5, reaching an all-time peak

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*This is not to deny that tin ores, as these near the surface were worked out, would also require these technological advances for profitable exploitation in the future. But it was in fact the great profit opportunities which copper afforded, which provided the essential impulse for the greatly intensifying capitalisation of mining.

of 191,130 tons in 1855-60. Thereafter the decline was as spectacular as the rise. By 1880-5 output was only 26,150 tons and from there dwindled very rapidly indeed to a level of only 5,230 tons in 1895-1900. (5)

The production of tin ore which in 1750 was 2,876 tons, fluctuated around a low point of 2,273 tons in 1751, and did not exceed three thousand tons until 1786, when it stood at 3,399. From 1798 to 1815, output was again below 3,000 tons a year, but exceeded 4,000 in 1817 and 1818. In only two years before 1837 did production exceed 5,000, one of which was 1827, when a peak of 5,555 tons was produced. (6) By the middle of the nineteenth century output was past the 10,000 tons mark, and a period of sustained high output ran from 1863 to 1866, when for four successive years it was above 15,000 tons. The peak year was 1871 when 16,272 tons were produced, although production remained above 10,000 tons a year until 1895. Thereafter to the outbreak of the First World War production continued at a consistent but lower level, ranging from 6,392 tons in 1899, to 8,355 in 1913. (7)

The industry's development was reflected in technical as well as in productive advance. In 1741 there were only three Newcomen engines in the county; by the time the first Watt engine was erected in 1776, there were more than forty. (8)

From the time of their first installation to 1800, Boulton and Watt erected 52 engines in the county. Cornish engineers, Bull, Hornblower and others, erected perhaps a further 30 "piracies" between them during this time. (9) (Piracies by virtue of the fact that Watt's patent did not lapse until 1800).

In the course of the nineteenth century pumping engines improved, the Cornish Beam Engine being widely regarded as a model of efficiency for its time. Little direct contribution was made by this technological advance to the comfort of the labouring miner, for by the middle of the nineteenth century, mechanical means of raising and lowering the men had still only been installed in a handful of mines.

This was a period of social every bit as much as economic and technological transformation. It is the social history of the period which is the main concern of this study. In a comedy written in 1734, Sir John Vanburgh has this to say of the Cornish:

> "Is a woman of your charms made for a Cornish Hug?
> If they must marry, e'en let 'em take some of their
> own Blowsabells, and not intrude among us Christians!" (10)

Yet in 1857, a Quarterly Reviewer was describing the Cornish as, "one of the most orderly and civilized societies in the world." (11)

References

(1) J. Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution (Liverpool 1953) p. 40
(2) See D.B. Barton, A History of Copper Mining in Cornwall & Devon (Truro 1961) pp. 10-11
(3) ibid. Appendix I p. 90
(4) Sir Charles Lemon, "Statistics of the Copper Mines of Cornwall", Journal of the Statistical Society of London (1838) p. 78
(5) Barton opp. cit. p. 90
(6) G.R. Lewis, The Stannaries (reprinted Truro 1965) Appendix J pp. 257-8
(7) B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (1962) p. 155
(8) Rowe opp. cit. p. 7 and p. 51
(9) D.B. Barton, The Cornish Beam Engine (Truro 1966) provides a history of Cornish Mine Engines
(10) Sir J. Vanburgh, The Cornish Squire. A Comedy (1734) p. 1
(11) Quarterly Review (1857) pp. 321-2

The Growth of Population

Before the 1801 Census no population aggregate can be regarded as more than an estimate. For the eighteenth century, I have used the figures calculated by Professor N.J.G. Pounds, both those which he published in 1943, and those which are contained in his unpublished doctoral thesis on the historical geography of Cornwall. (1)

Pounds bases his estimates on the returns made by the Cornish clergy to the Bishop of Exeter at several well-spaced intervals. These returns give the number of families in individual parishes, and Pounds uses a multiplier of 4.5 to convert these into aggregate population figures. The size of this multiplier is substantially in agreement with the findings of demographic historians. Although the method of using a multiplier on family figures presupposes a margin of error, Pounds is probably justified in claiming that his method, albeit calculation rather than computation, compares favourably with the results which might be expected from aggregating parish registers, given their notorious deficiencies.

These returns were made in 1672, 1744 and 1779. Pounds's figures for total county population at these dates are given in the following table:-

1672	1744	1779
103,000	125,800	148,729

Since the returns are made for individual parishes, Pounds is able to provide some indication of movement as well as growth. The overall increase figure for the county between 1672 and 1744 was slightly over 22%. Pounds's figures for individual mining parishes provide the following percentage increases:

Gwinnear	75
Illogan	70
Gwennap	80
Camborne	95
Kenwyn and Kea	400+
Breage	120
Germoe	90
St. Erth	50
St. Hilliary	100 (2)

It is clear that the mining parishes were rapidly increasing in population, partly at the expense of the non-mining parishes of western Cornwall, and partly from the non-mining eastern half of the county. It would not appear that at any time there was any significant movement into the county from outside. The 1851 Census contains a table giving the number of inhabitants out of 10,000 who resided in the county of their birth, Cornwall, with 9,322 was the highest in the country. (3)

The thirty-five year period from 1744 to 1779 saw a population increase of just over 18.2% and was still marked by increasing concentration in the mining areas, and continuing stagnation in the non-mining ones. From 1779 to the census of 1801, the percentage increase in the county population was approximately 14.7. Pounds's findings for this period show a measure of growth in the agricultural regions, which since mining was still on the increase, reflect an increasing prosperity in Cornish agriculture. Contemporary reports testify to their having been such an improvement. (4)

The decennial census figures published in 1861 provide the following figures for the overall county population:-

1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861
192,281	220,535	261,045	301,306	342,159	355,558	369,390

The following table summarises the percentage rates of increase from 1779 to 1861.

1779-1801	1801-11	1811-21	1821-31	1831-41	1841-51	1851-61
14.7	14	18	15	14	4	4

Over the half century from 1801 the population increased by 161,838 a percentage increase of 83.9.

Until 1841 there was a sustained high rate of population increase. This rate of increase slowed down markedly after 1841 a fact to which emigration may have largely contributed.

It has been mentioned above that there was little movement into the county, there was however considerable movement within it. Labour moved from

non-mining to mining parishes. The parish registers of Gulval, in which was situated the famous Ding Dong mine, reveal that of forty-one tinners married in the parish between 1754 and 1774, (the years for which occupational information is complete), fourteen came from other parishes. (5) There was also considerable movement between mining parishes by men following the varying fortunes of the mines. (6)

The most significant internal movement was that which took place in the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century. From about 1820 can be dated the beginnings of the exploitation of the mineral resources of eastern Cornwall. Contrary to an old belief that there was little potential for mining east of Truro, the Eastern districts proved to contain considerable mineral wealth. The rise of these new mining regions reached boom conditions after 1830, a boom accompanied by an associated crop of speculative company flotation which gave the county a bad name in London investment circles.*

Population in these eastern mining districts grew very rapidly and suddenly. The influx came both from neighbouring non-mining parishes and, especially after 1840, from the older mining parishes of the west. Graph I illustrates the rapid rise of a sample of eastern mining parishes, and the relatively stagnant population situation in the non-mining parishes in the same area. Graph II indicates on the same basis the pattern in the western part of the county. In both cases the red lines represent mining and the green non-mining parishes. The rapid growth of the eastern districts after 1831 contrasts with the pattern in the west, where only St. Just of the sample used had a higher population in 1861 than it had had in 1841, and even in this case the rate of growth slowed noticeably after 1851.

The village of Tywardreath can be cited as an example of the rapid rise of a new mining centre. (graph I). The population almost trebled between

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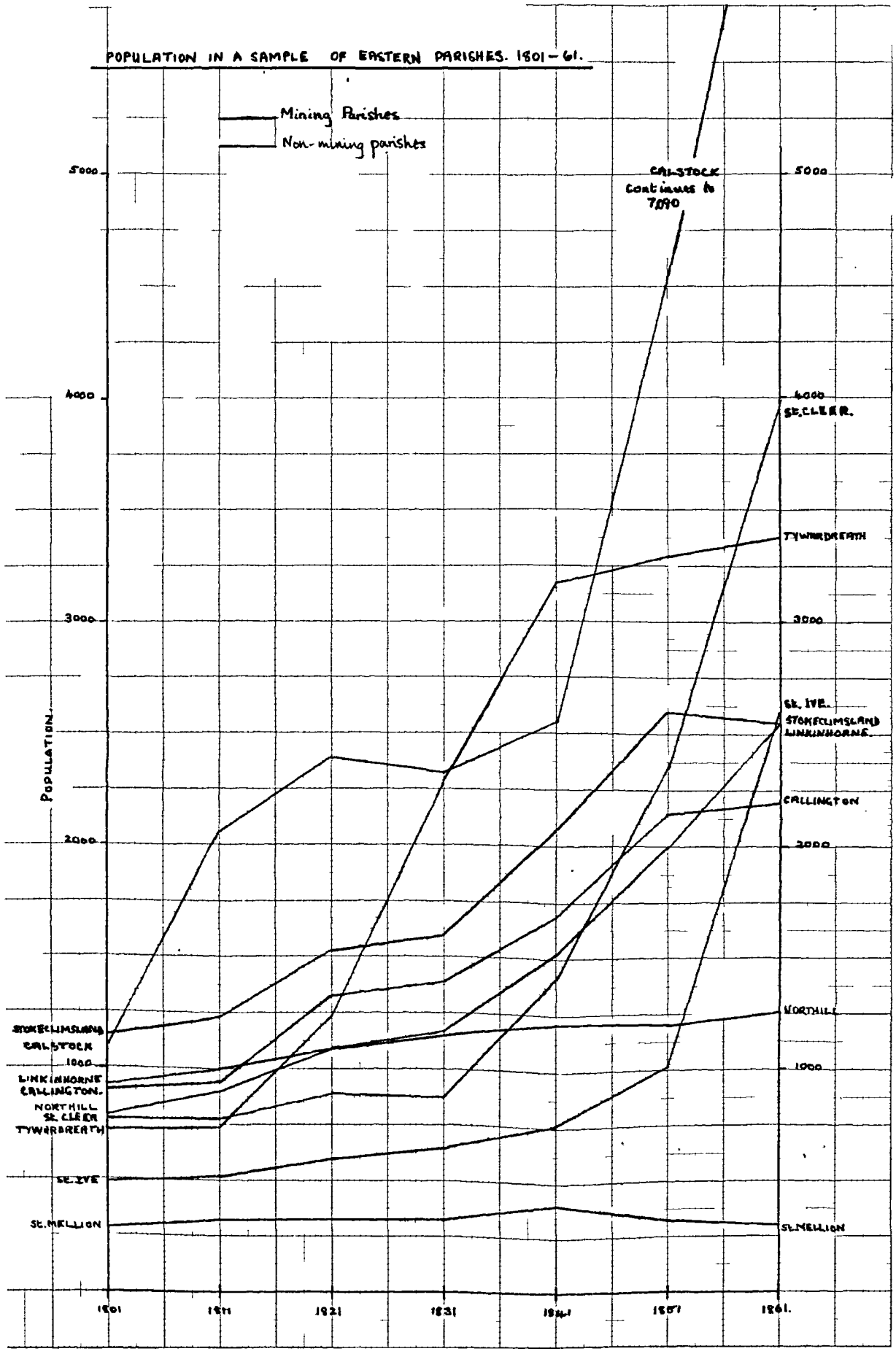
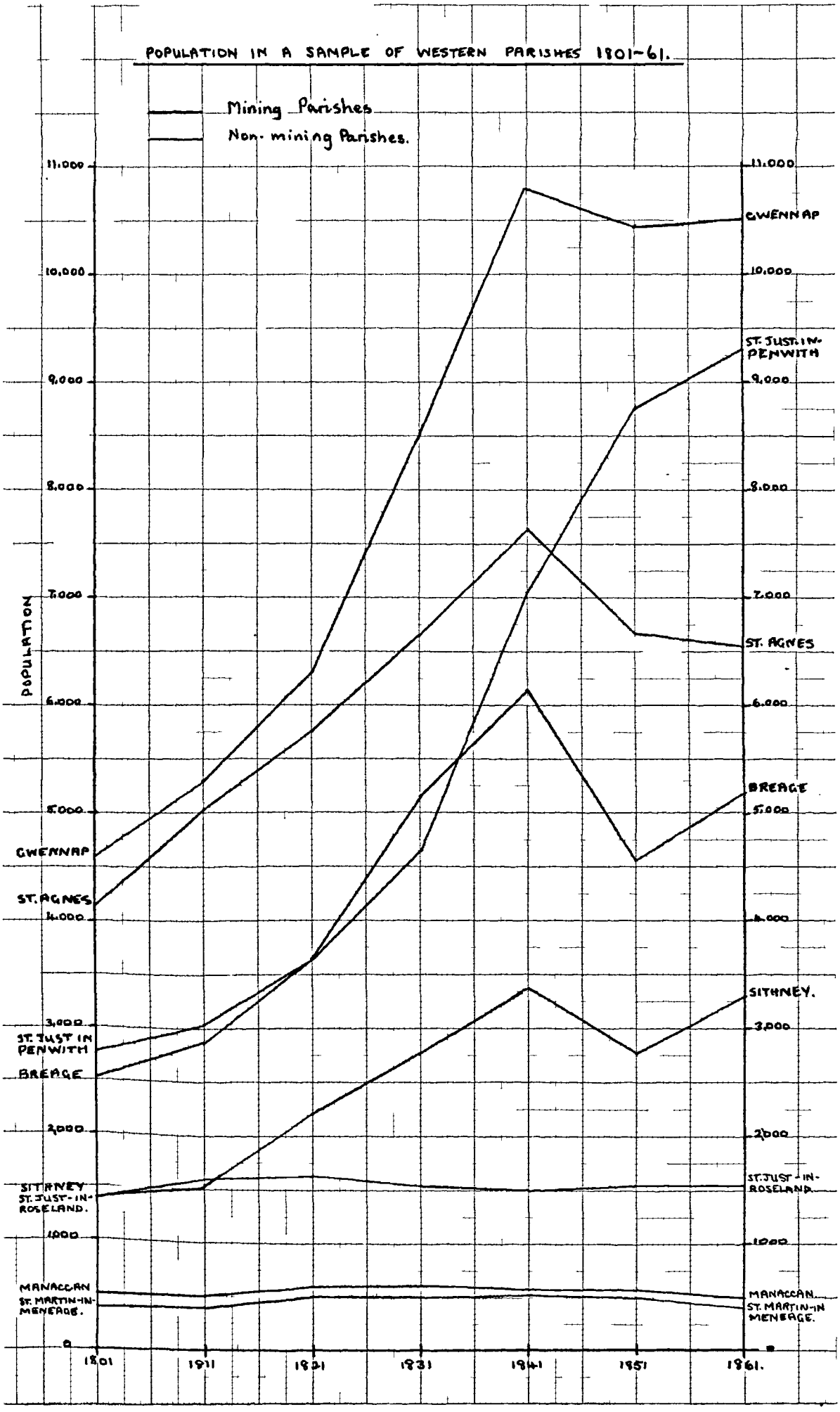
*This reputation was widely known. Mine swindles form the plots both to R.M. Ballantyne's Deep Down (1869) and Trollope's The Three Clerks (1858).


POPULATION IN A SAMPLE OF EASTERN PARISHES. 1801 – 61.
Mining Parishes
Non-mining parishes
CALSTOCK
Continues to
7,000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
POPULATION.
ST. CLEER.
TYWARDREATH
ST. IVE.
STOKECLIMSLAND
LINKINHORNE.
CALLINGTON
NORTHILL
ST. MELLION
1801
1811
1821
1831
1841
1851
1861.

GRAPH I.


POPULATION IN A SAMPLE OF WESTERN PARISHES 1801-61.
Mining Parishes
Non-mining Parishes.
POPULATION
11,000
10,000
9,000
8,000
7,000
6,000
5,000
4,000
3,000
2,000
1,000
0
GWENNAP
ST. AGNES
ST. JUST IN PENWITH
BREAGE
SITHNEY
ST. JUST-IN-ROSELAND.
MANACCAN
ST. MARTIN-IN-MENEAGE.
1801
1811
1821
1831
1841
1851
1861.

GRAPH II.

1821 and 1841, the village becoming sizable enough to merit its own market, which was formally opened in 1833 a toast being drunk to the mining industry which had made the rise possible. (7)

The Size of the Labour Force in the Mines

Thus far the growth of the industry has been considered both from the statistics of mineral production, and from the overall population growth. It is now to be indicated from such direct measurements of the labour force engaged in the mines as exist.

This presents some difficulties. In the first place a certain vagueness of nomenclature exists. The word "tinner", which was more widely used than "miner" in the eighteenth century, was applied with a lack of specificity which frequently permitted it to refer to copper as well as tin miners. Even the word miner was sometimes used as a blanket term to cover everybody involved in the industry from mine owners to the poorest surface labourers.

In the second place the statistical data available before the mid-nineteenth century is very inadequate. The estimates of visitors to the county were often widely out, usually considerably exaggerating, which perhaps suggests that they received at least the impression of a considerable scale of activity.

Celia Fiennes who visited Cornwall in 1698, before the copper industry had really "taken-off", thought that there were "more than 1,000 men and boys", employed in the tin mines. (8)

The increasing exploitation of copper ores must have occasioned a considerable increase in the labour force in the first half of the eighteenth century, but no estimates, let alone computations, are available to gauge its dimensions. An anonymous survey made in 1755, gives a picture of considerable activity in tin in the St. Agnes district, and of extensive copper mining in the Redruth district, but attempts no estimation of the labour force. (9) Perhaps the greatest weight of evidence on the increasing populousness of the

mining districts is contained in the journals of John and Charles Wesley, this however gives an impression only.

Pryce in supposing there to be 20,000 persons working at the mines in 1778 was wildly over-estimating. (10) That he was so, is clear from the returns made by Thomas Wilson, the agent of Boulton and Watt in Cornwall to his employers in 1787. These figures can be regarded as a computation rather than an estimation of the employees in the copper mines. He put the total labour force at 7,196 of which 2,684 were women and children. (11) Wilson's figures have a limitation in that they apply only to copper mines and do not count the tin miners who at this time must have numbered more than a thousand, and in all probability nearer two thousand. Secondly, 1787 was a time of acute depression in Cornish copper mining, coming at the peak of the period of intense competition with the low priced Angelsey ore. Although it is true that the first large mine to close, North Downs, did not cease production until the following year, marginal labour may have been leaving the industry for several years before 1787.

It might be added as indicative of the wild estimates to which visitors were prone, that the Rev. ~~Siebberg~~ Stebbing Shaw who visited Cornwall in 1788, supposed there to be over 40,000 miners underground. (12)

In his eviden e before the Select Committee on the Copper Trade in 1799, a Corni spokesman estimated the numbers employed in the copper industry as being between five and six thousand men and four to five thousand women. (13) This is close to Wils n's figure, if one allows for a reasonable expansion over the intervening period, and for the fact that the circumstances of the inquiry would have led the witness to emphasise as much as possible the importance of copper mining to the county's economy. This might also explain what would appear to be an over-estimation of the ratio of female to male labour. Once again no figures for tin miners are provided. They probably numbered fewer than they did in 1787 since tin production in 1798 was 2,800 tons compared with 3,204 in 1787. (14)

Henri de Villefosse in 1819 estimated the labour force of the mines as 14,000 a figure which sounds reasonable, but for which he provides no authority. (15)

In 1838, Sir Charles Lemon, published a statistical survey of the Cornish copper mines, which contained the first really accurate count of the miners in both tin and copper. Basing his computation on returns from 160 mines, he computed for 1837, a total labour force of 27,028. He felt however, that he had almost certainly omitted several small mines from his survey and that the actual labour force was probably near 28,000. Of the 27,028 which he actually computed, 17,898 were adult males, 4,604 adult females, and 4,526 children. Lemon does not indicate at what age he divided adults and children. (16)

The 1841 census returns put the labour force at 25,396 males, of whom 7,137 were under twenty years of age, plus 1,612 persons employed in dressing and preparing ores, and 2,158 females giving a total labour force of 29,166. (17)

The 1851 census returned the labour force as 36,284: 30,362 male and 5,922 female. (18) (These figures are for all ages. A detailed examination of the age structure is given below). Of the males 15,608 were classed as copper miners, 12,255 as tin miners, and 2,499 as lead miners. For female labour the corresponding figures were: copper 3,684, tin 1,876 and lead 362. The following table gives the numbers of workers of both sexes who were under fifteen years of age: (19)

	Copper	Tin	Lead
Males	2,101	1,949	240
Females	918	411	109

In 1861 the total labour force was 35,796, a decline since 1851. Of these 29,084 were males and 6,712 females. For the first time since the early eighteenth century, tin miners outnumbered copper miners, whilst lead mining also showed a decline. The figures for males were, tin 13,869,

copper 13,469, and lead 1,721. For females the figures were, tin 2,989, copper 3,443, and lead 280. The following table gives the number of workers in 1861 who were under fifteen years of age:

	Copper	Tin	Lead
Males	1,711	1,938	210
Females	865	735	85 (20)

It will be noticed that although the number of females employed in copper mines declined between 1851 and 1861, there were still, unlike the male labour situation, more females employed in copper than in tin. This was because the preparation of copper ore employed a larger proportionate female labour force than did the preparation of tin ores. A writer in 1810 records:

> "(The tin mines) will likely take all the men that can be spared from the copper mines, but the copper mines when in full working employ a good number of women and children who are useless about tin." (21)

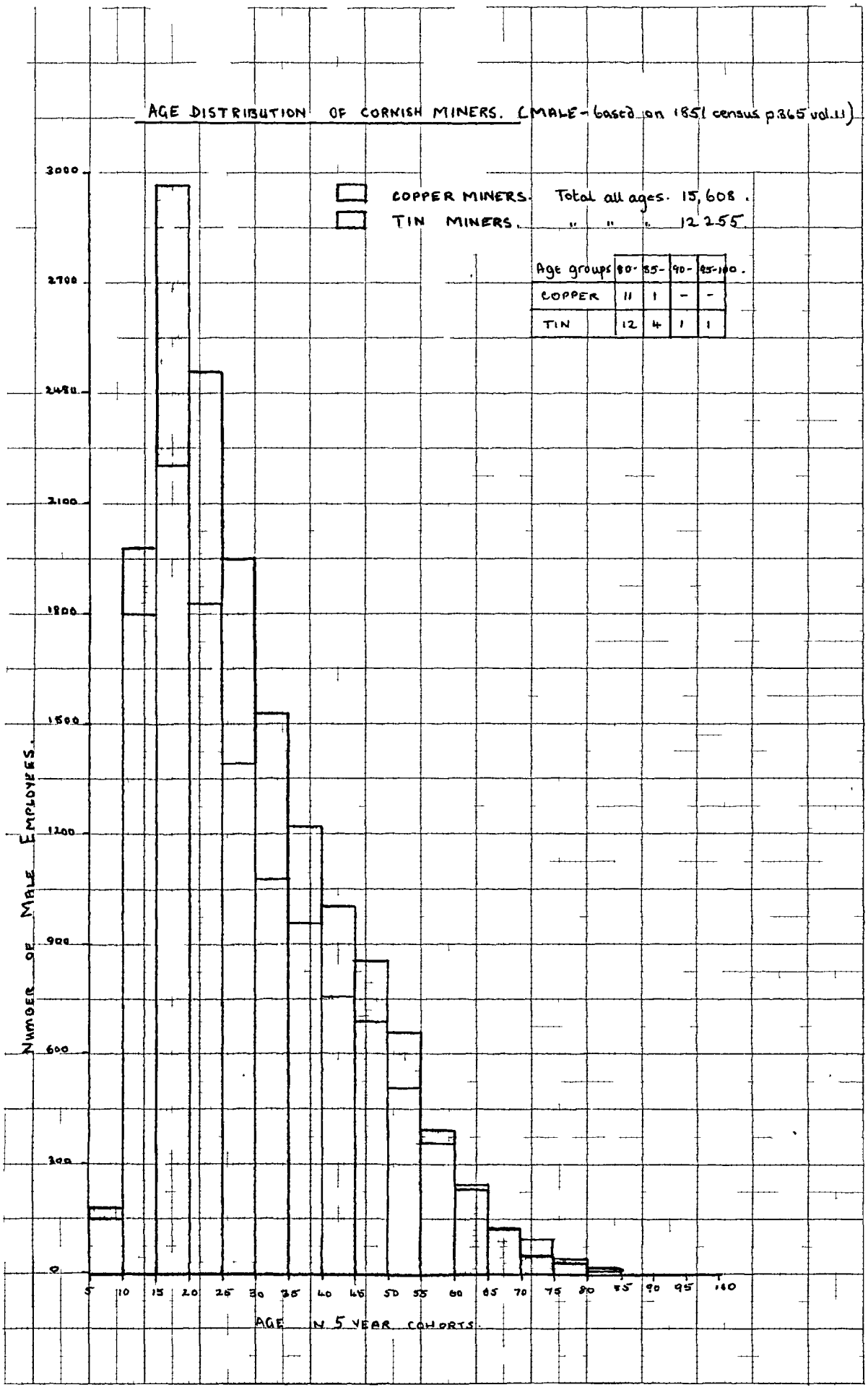
Statistical information for the mid-nineteenth century enables us to make some quantitive assessment of three other features of the mine labour force viz. the age distribution of the workers, the size of the labour force at individual mines, and the occupational distribution of the miners in the census registration districts.

Age distribution of the labour force

Graph 3 which has been based on a table in the 1851 census, (22) indicates the age distribution of the male labourers in the tin and copper mines. Graph 3A does the same for the female labourers, and graph 3B gives the distribution of both male and female labour in the much less important lead mining industry.

Graph 3. A marked feature is the small proportion of miners in the middle age range. There are surprisingly few miners in the age range from 35 to 50. This reflects the short working life of the Cornish miner; Cornwall having in 1851 a higher proportion of widows to its total female population than any other county. (23)

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CORNISH MINERS. (MALE - based on 1851 census p.365 vol.II)



Age groups	80-	85-	90-	95-100.
COPPER	11	1	-	-
TIN	12	4	1	1

GRAPH 3.

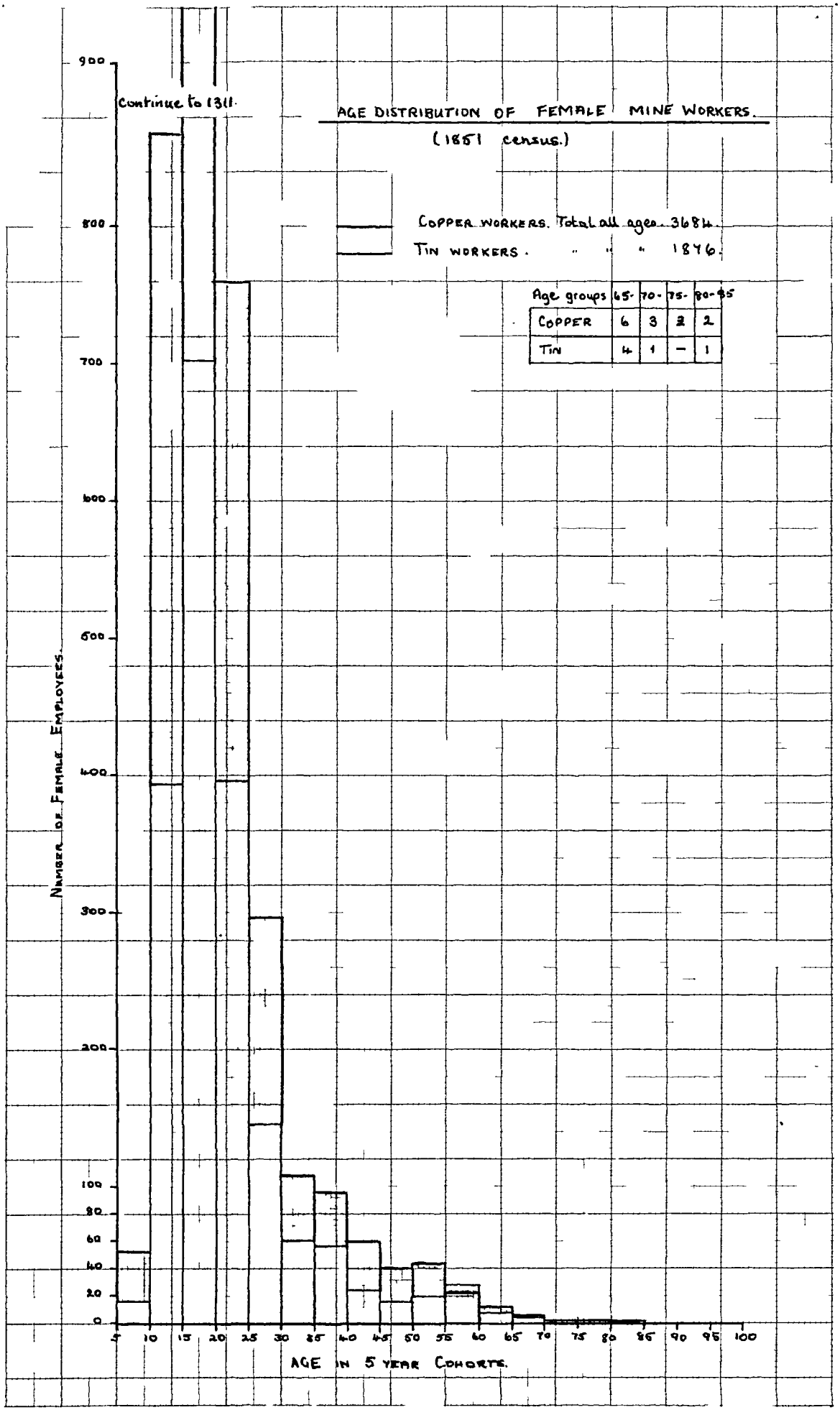
In discussing how far this pattern of distribution was prevalent before 1851, several factors must be borne in mind. In the first place the short working life of the miner was due to the environmental conditions in which he worked, rather than to his general standard of living. His early death was brought on by years of labour in badly ventilated shafts and dust laden air. Therefore even if the standard of living of the miner could be shown to have measurably improved in the century after 1750, it would have had little more than a marginal effect on the longevity of the miner. Such an improvement would depend on improved methods of ventilation, and the adoption of mechanical means of raising the miners from the shafts, to relieve them of the life-shortening strain of ladder climbing. Although improvements in both directions were made, they were slow in coming, and by the mid-nineteenth century still restricted to a few of the better run mines. (24) Further more such improvements frequently meant that miners could be asked to work deeper lodes and for a longer period of time. A tendency which must have offset some of the benefits of environmental improvements.

In the second place, the health of the miner only began to receive the attention which it merited in the mid-nineteenth century. The absurd comment of the historian Borlase that:

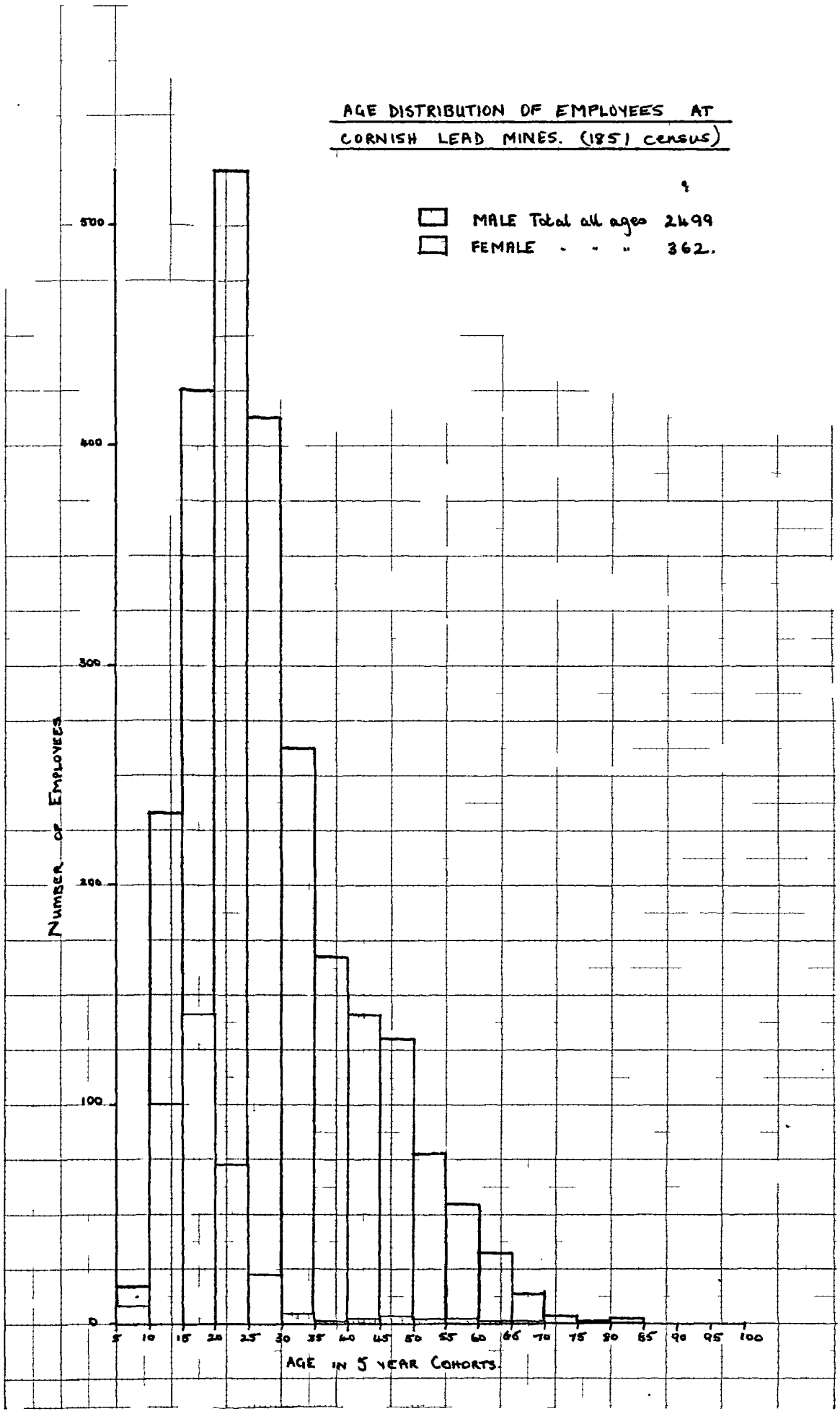
> "The miners particularly, who escape accidents, and live temperately, generally live to a great age; the alternate daily use of cold and heat, hardening their bodies equally against the different extremes of weather." (25)

is an illustration of the ignorance of the health problem that prevailed in the eighteenth century. Even Pryce, a doctor by profession and a pioneer of the idea of a miners' hospital, was concerned more with the obvious effects of mine accidents than with the lingering effects of the "miners' disease." In the later nineteenth century a single word such as consumption still served to cover many kinds of affliction brought on by a variety of causes.

Thirdly the predominance of the younger age groups may even have been more significant before the mid-nineteenth century, since by that time


AGE DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE MINE WORKERS.
(1851 census.)
Continue to 1311
COPPER WORKERS. Total all ages. 3684.
TIN WORKERS. " " " 1876.
Age groups 65- 70- 75- 80-85
COPPER 6 3 2 2
TIN 4 1 — 1
NUMBER OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES.
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
80
60
40
20
0
5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100
AGE IN 5 YEAR COHORTS.

GRAPH 3A.


AGE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES AT
CORNISH LEAD MINES. (1851 census)
MALE Total all ages 2499
FEMALE " " " 362.
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
0
100
200
300
400
500
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
AGE IN 5 YEAR COHORTS.

GRAPH 3B.

considerable emigration was taking place, and the emigrants came largely from the younger age groups.

It would appear likely therefore that the age composition of the male labour force did not significantly alter from the mid-eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century. Especially in view of the fact that miners worked in deeper levels and for longer hours in the nineteenth century, it does not seem reasonable to assume that the growth of the industry brought any significant improvement in the life expectancy of the working miner.

The graphs do not suggest that in respect of the longevity of the miners, there was any significant difference between copper and tin mining.

Graph 3A For the female labour force the pattern is very striking; a very rapid fall off after the early twenties. Marriage must be the operative factor here; the pattern strongly suggesting that it was not the practice for married women to continue work. Those who continued to work after the age of thirty were probably mainly widows or spinsters.

Graph 3B Lead mining was a minor industry, even less important in the eighteenth century than in 1851. The graph indicates a pattern which hardly differs from that in the tin and copper mining.

The Size of the Labour force at individual mines.

From the statistics published by Sir Charles Lemon in 1838, (26) it is possible to construct a table which provides a picture of the size of the labour force at individual mines. Lemon's list contained 160 mines, but since for one of these no employment figures were given, the actual total was 159 mines, the aggregate labour force of which was 27,206.

Mines employing:	Number of Mines
10 or under persons	30
11-50 " " "	42
51-100 " " "	23
101-250 " " "	39
251-500 " " "	15
501-1,000 " " "	5
More than 1,000 "	5

The average size of the labour force was just over 171.

There was clearly a tremendous range in the scale of enterprise, which must have been reflected in a wide variety of employment conditions. However, less than 12% of the labour force was employed in mines employing less than a hundred persons, and more than 60% were employed in mines employing more than 250 persons. The five large concerns which employed in excess of a thousand labourers each were:

Consols and United Mines (Gwennap)	3,196
Fowey Consols and Lanescot	1,680
Tresavean	1,354
Wheal Vor	1,174
East Wheal Crofty	1,004

with the exception of Fowey Consols and Lanescot, these mines were all in the western parts of the county, and employed together just over 31% of the total labour force.

There is no comparable survey for any other years of Cornish mining history. Scattered references reveal that there were mines employing several hundred workers by the end of the eighteenth century. Herland was employing 300 men besides female and child labourers in 1795, Tin Croft had a labour force of between three and four hundred in 1798, at which time Wheal Alfred was employing about a thousand and Cook's Kitchen about 340. (27)

The position of the mine labourer in the occupational structure of the county. From the occupational tables in the 1851 census, it is possible to calculate the percentage of the adult (over 20) male labour force of the total labour force of the county which was employed in the mines. In the county as a whole there were 85,509 males over the age of twenty, of these 20,483 were miners, a percentage of just under 24.

For census purposes the county was divided into registration districts, and occupational statistics are given for these. Although in only one of these districts, Stratton, were there no miners at all, the percentage of miners to the total adult male labour force elsewhere varied considerably.

In the Redruth district, the central copper mining area, containing the important mining parishes of Camborne, Gwennap and Illogan amongst others, 53.83% of the labour force of adult males were miners. In the Helston district, containing important parishes like Breage, Wendron and Sithney, the percentage was 31.36. Penzance, containing the old mining area of St. Just, as well as mines around St. Ives, St. Hilliary and Marazion, the percentage was 25.65. The Truro district contained a large number of totally agricultural parishes, also included the mining parishes of Kenwyn and Kea, St. Agnes and Perranzabuloe, and here the percentage was 25.65. Falmouth with a percentage of 3.23, was the only registration district in west Cornwall, in which mining was unimportant.

In the north and east of the county, Camelford and St. Germans had percentages of 2.26 and 1.81 respectively. The bare moorland tracts of Bodmin were hardly more productive of ore than they were of agricultural produce, here the percentage was 8.73. St. Austell, long connected with the tin mining industry, had a percentage of 27.51. The St. Columb district was largely agricultural, but contained sufficient pockets of mining activity to give it a percentage of 12.79.

The most surprisingly high percentages were those for the two eastern districts of Liskeard and Launceston, here the percentages of 26.43 and 26.21 were high in view of the fact that extensive copper mining in these districts only began after 1830.

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A Note on the Organization of the Mining Industry

Metal mining being an expensive and risky enterprise, was only rarely carried on by a single entrepreneur. Pryce in 1778 wrote that the charges of the venture were borne by many partners. (1) This system known as the Cost Book System, prevailed throughout the period of this study. The shareholders, known as adventurers, formed a company and agreed with the landowners under whose land the minerals to be exploited lay, to lease the mining rights for a number of years. These landowners were known as "lords", and received payment in the form of dues or "doles" or "dishes", as they were variously known, of about a sixteenth of the value of the produce, although dues could on occasion be as high as an eighth.

In most mines, one of the adventurers known as the purser was appointed to be the financial overseer of the enterprise, in charge of the mine accounts. If there were profits, they were distributed at intervals among the adventurers according to the size of their holdings. If there were losses, then calls for finance were made on the adventurers. This system was substantially unaltered from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The accounts given by Pryce (1778) and Watson (1848) are alike in all their main points. (2)

Under the purser, was the head captain or manager (often known as the agent) who was in charge of the day to day running of the mine. Under him were subordinate captains: some in charge of surface work and known as "grass" captains, and some underground captains. Beneath them was the labour force made up of tributers, tutworkers, surface workers, and a range of specialised employees such as engineers, carpenters, blacksmiths, storemen etc. This was the usual organisation of a medium or large sized enterprise. In smaller undertakings, and more generally in the eighteenth century, there might be a smaller hierarchy of captains, or perhaps only one captain.

The pivotal figure of this organisation was the captain. He was generally promoted from the ranks of the working miners. This was necessary,

for as Pryce pointed out, he needed to be, "an experienced miner, and to understand every distinct branch of the business." (3) It was the captains who were in daily face to face contact with the labouring miners, supervised their work, fined their breaches of regulations, measured their results, and bargained with them for the contract rates which they were to receive.

In general the captains received a "good press" from those who wrote on the industry. Pryce thought that the adventurers were often injured by dishonest captains, "conniving at the impositions of the common men", but thought that this was the fault of the parsimony of the adventurers in paying wages to the captains as low as 40s. a month, which made their prospects less favourable than those of the tributers with their chances of exceptional wages. (4)

John Taylor, whose knowledge of the early nineteenth century organization of the mining industry was unrivalled, thought highly of the captains, whom he described as having been chosen for their skill and character from the working miners. He thought it would be unjust to describe the industry without remarking on how much, "the perfection of the system of management in the mines has been owing to the zeal and intelligence of this respectable class of men, and how much its useful application depends on their knowledge and activity." (5)

In a work published in 1824, the duties of the captains were enumerated. They were to inspect the various departments of the work; see the men were properly deployed about the works; notice their industry or idleness;* observe the increase or decline of the prospects before them; regulate the price of labour according to the difficulty of the ground; see that the timber propping was sufficient; that the labour force was properly divided

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*At North Roskear in 1841. the captains used marks to check on the men's industry. That this was not usual is indicated by the fact that no less than 56 miners were discharged for removing the marks.
(Cornwall Gazette 1st Oct. 1841)

into those breaking new ground and those raising ore; to keep an eye on the consumption of candles, gunpowder etc.; and to guard against fraud. (6)

To these we could add the inspection of the ladders and the overseeing of the mine regulations. The writers who enumerated the captains' tasks thought that with few exceptions they were worthy of the trust placed in them. (7) The Quarterly Review in 1827 described the captains as "excellent men ... selected from among the working miners", and stated their wages to be about £80 or £90 a year. (8)

There were exceptions, and the following description of a badly managed mine in 1795, will serve to illustrate just how important good captains were to the profitability of a mining enterprise:

> "I have no doubt from the management I saw, and what I did discover, that more than £200 per month was wasted in that mine ... passed unjustly into the hands of the Purser, Blacksmiths, Merchants, Ropers and some favourite labourers who were permitted to take tributes by which some got £40, £50 and £60 per quarter ... the Captains were fed so high as to be unable to go underground."

Accusations were also made of fraudulent dealing in mine supplies, and the captains were said to be part-time publicans and to keep a gin shop in the stamping mill. (9) This was at Great Work Mine. There was an equally bad management at Great Beam Mine in the mid-nineteenth century, when many miners seem not to have put in an appearance for weeks at a time and still drew full wages. (10)

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THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Physical Conditions of Labour

> "At a comparatively early age the miners almost invariably exhibit in their features and persons the unmistakeable signs of debilitated constitutions. Their faces are sallow, they have an anxious expression of countenance, and their bodies are thin. At the border of middle age, or soon after their health begins to fail, the maturity and confirmed strength of that time of life seems to be denied to them." (1)

This was how the commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of the mining population, which reported in 1864, described the Cornish miner. Their report contains a mass of material, statistics and opinion, which lends unassailable support to the simple statement of one of the witnesses:

> "You can not expect miners to live as long as other men." (2)

"What do you call an old miner?" a mine captain was asked. He replied that a man of 50 or 60 would be "very old" for a miner after working underground. When asked what became of the old miners, he replied, "They dwindle down, they waste away in time." (3)

A calculation based on statistics from the General Register Office produced significant results. A sample of six parishes was taken, and the death returns for the five years 1849-53 were examined. It was found that if 100 were taken as representing the rate of mortality among non-mining males at each ten year period of life, the indices for mining males would be: 15-25 - 125; 25-35 - 101; 35-45 - 143; 45-55 - 227; 55-65 - 263; 65-75 - 189. (4)

This report was the most thorough investigation of the miner's working environment made during the period of this study. Few descriptions of eighteenth century conditions survive. Pryce, in 1778, provides no picture of normal underground working conditions, although he was, as a mine doctor, aware enough of the frequency of accidents, to be a staunch campaigner for a county infirmary. He does describe the arduous labour involved in draining the mines by means of a rag and chain pump before the availability of steam pumping engines on a large scale. The men worked stripped to the waist, and

according to Pryce, the labour was so great, that he had witnessed the loss of many lives by it. (5)

A visitor in 1788 asked the readers of his itinary to try to picture, "the sooty complexions of the miners, their labour, and mode of living and you may truly fancy yourself in another world." (6) Another visitor who descended a mine in 1791, has left this description of his experience:

> "At about eighty fathoms depth we came to a vein of copper ore, where two sorry wretches were busied in the process of their miserable employment. With hardly room to move their bodies, in sulphureous air, wet to the skin, and buried in the solid rock, these poor devils live and work for a pittance barely sufficient to keep them alive; picking out the hard ore by the glimmering of a small candle whose scattered rays will hardly penetrate the thick darkness of the place. Those who live on earth in affluence, and are continually murmering for additional comforts; would surely, if they saw these scenes, be happy with what they have." (7)

Steam pumping removed the necessity for the violent labour of the rag-and-chain pump, but the solution of the drainage problem meant that workers could be sent deeper into the less pure air and more extreme temperatures; unsavoury working conditions reached by increasingly long ladder climbs. The introduction of safety fuses, in general use by the third decade of the nineteenth century, and of composition rods, instead of spark-producing iron, for ramming home gunpowder charges, helped to decrease the risk of violent death, but the 1864 report is a sobering document which makes it clear that if working conditions had improved by that date, they improved only from extremely bad to very bad.

The commissioners thought that the general ill-health was due to several factors: the severity of the labour, and the arduous task of ladder climbing; the wet and draughty places in which the labour was performed; the impurity of the air breathed; exposure to cold and damp; and the early age at which underground labour commenced. (8)

Of these bad air was probably the most important. The commissioners found that although there was some evidence of an improvement in ventilation

methods in the preceeding twenty or thirty years, (9) the state of affairs was still very imperfect. 142 samples of air were taken from the mines, of these only 17 or 11.9% contained the normal proportion of oxygen, 38 or 26.76% were defined as "impure", and 87 or 61.2% were classed as extremely bad. (10)

An ill-ventilated place was defined by a mine captain in 1835 as one in which a candle would continue to burn. (11) This was at best a rough test indeed, since a candle could continue to burn, especially if placed on its side, well after the air was beginning to have an adverse effect on human lungs. Due to the difficulties of underground supervision, and the lack of safety regulations, it was also a test which a miner anxious to get at good ore could circumvent:

> "I have worked on a tribute where I had the candle perhaps eight feet behind me, it would not burn where I was working, and we were doing very well, and you do not think about the injury then." (12)

It was not just the impurity of the air, some places were cold and damp. The miners often worked in wet places (13) and temperatures were often high. In some mines from 80 to 90 degrees, and in one mine in 1864, they were as high as 110 degrees. (14) Postures necessitated by the confines of the underground levels meant sometimes labour had to be performed in cramped and harmful position. (15) There would seem to have been some improvement in this respect by the early nineteenth century, for when in 1819 an old part of the Consolidated Mines was re-opened, the passages of the old workings were found to be very narrow and ill-ventilated in comparison with the more recent workings. (16)

Even if the miners felt that the air in their place of work was impure, there was no certainty that the agent would agree to amelioration, as the following dialogue from the 1864 report suggests:

> "Did you ask the Agent to improve the air? —— We generally complain of having poor air, when we have it, and try to have a machine to blow air to us; sometimes we get it, and sometimes we cannot.

What was the reason why you could not get it? —— I do not know, it might be done if they had a mind to put it for us.
Have you ever been refused? —— Yes.
You have spoken to the agents, and they have refused to put it? —— Yes they have refused to put it." (17)

After about eight hours labour in these conditions, the miner had to climb what must have seen endless ladders through the draughty shafts, frequently in wet clothing, to emerge into the cooler air of the surface. Often a further three mile walk would be needed before he reached his home. It was necessary for the health of the miner that he have at least the opportunity of changing into dry clothing when he reached the surface, and perhaps of washing in hot water before beginning the long walk home. It was said in 1835, that it was the practice in the best mines to provide rooms in which the men's dry clothes could be hung, and their working clothes dried. In the large Consolidated Mines, this room was heated by long tubes, and the clothes were hung up to dry under the attention of some old men. (18) This was not a typical arrangement. Dr. Barham stated in 1842, that commonly that the only means that the miners had of utilising the hot water provided free of cost by the engines, was from an open rivulet in a bleak and exposed situation. Even at mines where bathrooms were provided, the accommodation for dressing was often defective in being cold and chilly, when given the availability of hot water from the engine, it could have been made warm at trifling expense. Barham found that only at Dolcoath had anything deserving the name of proper baths been erected. (19) The 1864 Commissioners found that changing houses were often distant from the shaft openings and were frequently low, ill-adapted buildings with unglazed windows. (20)

Long ladder climbs were the almost universal means of ascending and descending the shafts in 1835, (21) although about this time a man engine was being used at Tresavean. (22) In 1857 a writer was still finding it incredible that the man engine had made so little progress, up to that date only

two or three having been installed. (23) In fact ladders were still the almost universal means of ascent in 1864. In some mines as much as three hours a day was estimated to have been taken up in climbing ladders. (24) Some of the ladders were perpendicular, and few of them were very much inclined. Only in a few well run mines was sollaring provided at regular intervals to prevent a falling miner from being precipitated to the shaft bottom. (25)

Violent death through accident was an ever present feature of the industry. The columns of the local press carried week by week, reports of coroners inquests on mine casualties, and short of death, crippling or blinding was a daily run risk.* (26) The absence of the explosive gases present in coal mines meant that disasters involving the loss of many lives were rare.** The aggregate death toll was comprised largely of individual casualties. Miners could be killed or injured from gunpowder explosions, falling rock, flooding of the lower levels, or from slipping from greasy or worn out ladder rungs.

The 1864 Commissioners stated that miners themselves were in many instances guilty of disobedience of orders, negligence, and imprudence, but thought them not always so culpable as they were represented to be by the agents. (27) Falls of rock due to insufficient propping were in part due to miners attempting to save effort, but in part also to the agents attempts to save costs. (28) The missing and worn ladder rungs were hardly the responsibility of the working miners.

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*There were major disasters. One of the best known being the East Wheal Rose disaster of July 9th 1846. Flooding after a violent storm brought about the deaths of forty persons. (Cornish Banner August 1846, p. 57).

**The parish registers of Wendron specify deaths from mine accidents for a brief period in the burial register. In the years from 1796 to 1806, there was no year during which one of the village's male inhabitants was not killed in the mines. The total death role from mine accidents was 13. (Mss. C.R.O.).

Nevertheless carelessness was a frequent cause of accidental death.* In a single issue of a local paper in 1853, there are three reports on inquest proceedings on mine deaths. All were attributable to carelessness or thoughtlessness. A miner at Tincroft was killed when he went to the smith's shop to have his pick sharpened, carrying two pounds of gunpowder beneath his shirt. A second miner fell to his death from climbing over the shaft casing while attempting a short cut, and a third put his head over the shaft just as the engine bob was coming up. (29) Similar stories can be found in almost every issue; carelessness with explosives, or falls while attempting to ride up in the ore-skip to save a ladder climb, brought tragedy to many homes. A witness in 1835 described how difficult the agents of one mine had found it to persuade the men to use copper needles instead of iron ones when inserting their gunpowder charges, and so obviating the chance of a spark exploding the charge prematurely. The copper needles were supplied at the same cost as the iron ones, but the men would not for some time change their habits. The management prevailed in the end by depriving all miners injured whilst using the iron needles of relief from the accident fund. This extreme measure succeeded after all other expedients including stiff fines had failed. (30)

The major problem in discussing the conditions of labour, is that they varied considerably from one mine to another. In 1838, Sir Charles Lemon counted 160 mines in the county, ranging from small concerns employing a mere handful of men, to large concerns like Consols and United Mines in Gwennap employing above 3,000 persons. (31) The favourable impression which

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*C.F. William Jenkin to A.M. Hunt, 27th Feb. 1801, on gunpowder accidents in Tincroft:

> "Men always in the habit of working so (i.e. with gunpowder) seem to lose in a great measure a sense of their danger —— so that many lives are lost, more than (I believe) would have been had due care always been taken." (Jenkin Mss)

the 1835 Committee on Accidents in Mines received from the Cornish evidence, is largely accounted for by the fact that the bulk of the evidence was obtained from the well run Consolidated Mines. Barham in his report to the Sanitary Commissioners in 1842, singled out Dolcoath Mine. There the ventilation was good, and the men looked healthier than they did in most other mines. Care was taken of the ladders, and the safety fuse was universally used. Warm changing rooms were provided, wet working clothes were well dried, warm water was provided for washing, and a warming drink of hot soup was given to the men when they came up. Barham was not presenting Dolcoath as typical. Far from it. He was holding it up as an example which other mines would do well to follow. (32) The 1864 report points out that there were many mines of a speculative nature, in which any outlay beyond what was absolutely necessary was avoided, and the agents were deterred from suggesting improvements for fear of losing their jobs. (33)

The greater part of underground labour consisted of "beating the borer" i.e. driving an iron wedge-pointed instrument by blows from a heavy hammer, while the borer was being rotated by a second miner. When the rock had been bored to a sufficient depth, a charge of gunpowder was inserted and rammed down with a tamping iron, clay being used for wadding. Fuse, and later safety fuse, was employed, and the rock was blasted. After blasting, the pick was used to remove the partially separated pieces of rock.

The process was slow and laborious, and the amount of excavated metal was so small in volume compared with the worthwhile output of a coal mine, that there was no need for the underground employment of a large army of child drawers.

The Conditions of Child Labour

Child labour was employed for both surface tasks and underground. Dr. Barham reported in 1842, that the "earliest capacity for labour", of the miners' children was eagerly laid hold on, and "a life of toil is imposed before the

child has tasted what life is." (34) Underground labour was performed only by male children. These boys usually commenced underground labour between the ages of ten and twelve, and were generally employed by the labouring miners themselves, frequently by fathers or other relatives.

Surface labour was performed by both sexes, and was usually commenced by boys between the ages of eight and nine, and by girls between nine and ten. The surface labourers were usually employed directly by the agent. In neither category of employment is there any evidence of deliberate ill-treatment of the child labourers. They were subject to be fined (or "spelled") for lateness and absenteeism, and the threat of dismissal was the ultimate measure where reprimand failed. Corporal punishment was said in 1842 never to be inflicted. (35) This conclusion was drawn from the concurrent testimonies of a fair sample of witnesses.

A boy's commencement of underground labour was a turning point in his life. Hard as some surface tasks were, it was with going underground that serious deterioration of the health began:

> "When the boys in this district exchange surface for underground work, they speedily lose the freshness of complexion in the first place and gradually become for the most part sallow and sickly in hue." (36)

There were four principal tasks for which boys were employed underground: working the bellows-like air machines, which was not the hardest of tasks physically, but was performed in bad air; "rolling" barrows, i.e. transporting the ore in barrows to the collecting points from whence it could be raised to the surface, a laborious task which was made easier in mines where metal tram ways were laid down; holding and turning the borer while it was being driven by the hammer man, a task performed at the scene of the operations and so involving the boys in equal risk of accident and the effects of bad air, as the men themselves; and fourthly, the older boys sometimes themselves took a turn at heating the borer. (37)

The underground boys worked the same hours as the men, generally eight

hours under a shift system involving a regular rotation of night work. Like the men, the boys too had to endure the long ladder climbs to and from their place of work, which added considerably to the length and strain of their working day.

Dr. Barham de cribed surface labour, as, "not severe or injurious in kind." (38) Perhaps it was not in comparison with the conditions in which child employees in other early-Victorian industries worked. (Engels thought that child labour conditions in the Cornish mines were "comparatively endurable.") (39) But surface labour still involved young children in long hours of work, often in exposed situations.

A variety of tasks was required in the preparation of copper ores. The first operation was to throw aside the "deads" or worthless material with which the ore was mixed. This task, known as "picking", was performed by girls of about eight years. Previously to this operation the ores were washed by young boys. The girls engaged in picking, sat on a table and selected the good portions from a heap placed in front of them, the residue being thrown into boxes for subsequent re-examination. The task was performed in a shed open to extremes of weather, but was monotonous rather than laborious. The washing of the ores was effected by young boys who agitated a sieve under water. This frequently caused back ache, and ailments associated with working for long hours with wet feet.

The largest pieces of ore were broken up by men, but those which were somewhat smaller were broken by girls of about sixteen, with long handled hammers. This process was known as "spalling", and involved considerable labour. The resulting fragments were then "cobbed" by slightly younger girls. This consisted of breaking the ores into even smaller fragments by using small hammers on an anvil. The girls employed at this task frequently worked with their feet buried under piles of cold and wet fragments of discarded material.

The next process was known as "bucking". This was the pulverization of the fragments. It was achieved by girls using broad, square hammers of two or three pounds weight on a counter with inset anvils. The pulverised ore was allowed to fall to the ground, from whence it was swept up into barrows. "Bucking" was the hardest of the tasks employing female labour, and only strong girls could sustain it for long. Even apparently strong females exhibited symptoms of pains in the sides and back, giddiness, and faintness. (40) By 1842 in some mines this process was replaced by the use of a crushing machine worked by steam or water power. This machine produced a large amount of dust which had an adverse effect on the boys who operated it. (41)

Next in sequence came "jigging", separating the valuable from the less valuable part of the pulverized ore. This was done by a process of suspension in water, allowing the more ponderous material to subside during a process of agitation in a sieve. In 1842, this process was still generally performed manually, although machines were by then in use in a few mines. (42) Boys generally performed this task, which was probably the most tiring and injurious of all the surface tasks, despite which, it had to be performed by young or undersized boys, since it demanded a stooping posture difficult for taller boys to maintain. Pains in the back and limbs, headaches, and in some cas s the bringing up of blood, were stated to be the consequences of this employment. (43)

Tin ore preparation was a different process. After picking the ore was processed in a stamping mill, where it was pulverized by the action of heavy hammers. The resulting powder was carried by a stream of water through perforations in a set of plates surrounding the boxes in which the stamps worked. A series of washings succeeded to allow the water to carry off the lighter particles, while the more ponderous subsided. The number of such washings could amount to a hundred, and employed a large number of boys. The

process was known as "buddling", and many miners began their working lives as "buddle boys" at the stamps.

The working day for the surface workers was normally ten hours in the summer, and from daylight to dusk in the winter. (44) There was usually a lunch break of a half to an hour in duration.

There is some suggestion in the evidence collected in 1842, that some children preferred working at the mines to other employment. A girl who was employed at spalling and cobbing, stated that she had been previously employed as a straw bonnet maker, which employment she had left because of failing health. She found her employment at the mines "agreed with her very well." (45) Another female witness stated that she sometimes worked at the mine, and sometimes in domestic service. She did not find much difference in her health between the two employments, for although the work at the mine was harder for the time, when one left it for the day there was nothing more to do. (46)

Child labour at the surface did at least offer companionship. None of the surface tasks was of a solitary nature, and there seem to have been no barriers to the children conversing with each other. Indeed some were of the opinion that too much freedom in this direction was allowed. In his biography of his father who worked as a buddle boy in the 1770's, a nineteenth century writer remarks:

> "Associated in this occupation with wicked children, he suffered by the pernicious influence of their conversation and example. While his mother lived, she laboured to counteract the moral contagion to which she saw her child thus unavoidably exposed." (47)

A working miner with four daughters told Dr. Barham in 1842, that if he had fifty daughters he would not send them to the mine where they would be, "exposed to be corrupted by bad conversation". (48) A writer some years later complained of the absense of a matron at the mines to see, "that the rules of modesty be observed, that there be no unbecoming familiarity between the sexes, and that no foul language insulting to female delicacy be uttered." (49)

The contrast of Cornish conditions of child labour at the mines, with those in other areas, a contrast evident in the nature of the tasks performed, the hours worked, and the permitted range of punishments, sometimes makes a description of Cornish child labour appear to be a defence. The difference was one of degree. Cornish children worked long hours in unpleasant conditions at the expense of their childhood, health, and education. For child labour as an institution there is no defence.

In contrast to the brief replies to stock questions which form the bulk of the evidence collected in 1842, it is useful to examine a personal account of a childhood at the mines. Such an account is provided by John Harris in his autobiography. Harris, who was later to become a poet, may have been more sensitive to his environment than most children. But sensitivity is a matter of degree; not all perhaps felt as deeply as Harris, but all must have shared something of his experience and feelings. Harris was born in 1820, and left school at the age of nine to work first as a plough boy, and then at a tin stream. At the age of ten he became a surface worker at Dolcoath, the mine where his father worked as a tributer. He worked at picking, cobbing, and, a task which he seems to have especially disliked, wheeling the ores in a barrow from one process to the next:

> "until the skin came off my hands, and my arms were deadened with the heavy burden."

He felt too, the exposure to bad weather experienced by all the surface workers:

> "Sometimes I was scorched with the sun until I almost fainted; and then I was wet with the rains of heaven so that I could scarcely put one foot before another." (50)

However much the modern reader is annoyed by the air of pious self-congratulation which generally pervades Harris's autobiography, it is difficult not to feel something of his experience of going underground for the first time:

> "... my father took me with him into the interior of the earth, nearly two hundred fathoms under the surface.

> Ascending and descending the ladders, some sixty or seventy in number was a fearful task. On my first descent into the mine, when I was about thirteen years of age, my father went before with a rope fastened to his waist, the other end of which was attached to my trembling self. If my hands and feet slipped from the rounds of the ladder, perhaps my father might catch me, or the sudden jerk might pull us both into the darkness to be bruised to death on the rocks. Sometimes the ladder went down through the middle of a huge cavern, warping and shaking at every step, and with the candle stuck to my hat-crown I could not see from side to side. Sometimes they slanted one way, sometimes another; and sometimes we had to climb over craggy rocks crashed into the void, where a slip of the foot would be our doom ... But the climbing up evening after evening that was the task of tasks; Ladder after ladder, ladder after ladder, until they seemed interminable, and the top would never be reached. Panting and perspiring, after stopping again and again, we reached the top at last, where the pure air of heaven, fanned our foreheads, and filled our lungs with new life, though our flannel dress could not have been wetter if immersed in a river." (51)

Once they reached the top, Harris and his father had to walk three miles home. Harris's first underground task was wheeling his father's ores to the collecting points. The levels were so uneven, that the barrow often slipped from his grasp, and jagged corners, against which in that confined space and in that light, he could hardly avoid knocking, made him bleed freely:

> "Child as I was I had made up my mind not to cry; but the tears forced themselves out of my eyes upon my face, which I wiped away with my clayey fingers and tugged and pushed at the heavy barrow." (52)

Harris was thirteen when he first went underground. There were others who went through this experience at the age of ten.

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Methods of Wage Payment in the Cornish Mines

Payments on the basis of hours of labour are rare in the history of mining. Piece rates and varying systems of payment by results have been employed in many industries as an incentive to increased productivity. In the case of underground labour, the difficulties of supervision over a labour force which is scattered in small groups over extensive workings, make payment by results necessary, not only as a means of increasing productivity, but also to stop it falling below the norm. (1) Some system of payment by results was therefore usual in most of the major mining areas of the world. Dr. Hobsbawm has quoted the verdict of a Belgian writer of the mid-nineteenth century:

> "Daywork is the most disadvantageous method in mines, because the workers, having no interest to work actively, mostly slacken the sum of their efforts as soon as supervision ceases." (2)

Underground mining requires labour of two basic kinds. Workers are required to open up the mine itself, by sinking shafts, or driving levels; and workers are also required to excavate and raise the actual ore. In the terminology of metal mining, labour is needed for both "dead" and "paying" ground. In coal mining this distinction is perhaps not so clear cut: the shafts and levels being themselves formed by the excavation of the coal. In metal mines the ore makes up only a small percentage of the tonnage of material which must be excavated. There tends in metal mining to be a division of labour between the men who break the ground, and the miners who excavate the actual ore.

In the Cornish mines not only was there a wage differential in favour of the latter, but the method of payment itself differed. It was the obvious method to pay the men who broke the ground by the number of cubic fathoms horizontally which they drove a level, or the number vertically which they sunk a shaft. This method was employed in the Cornish mines and known as tutwork.

Such a method was not suited to the payment of the men who excavated the ore; weight and value, not distance was the measure in this case. It was possible to pay simply according to the tonnage of ore raised, and this was tried in the nineteenth century in some mines, but this did not encourage the miner to be selective. As the ore percentage contained in a ton of excavated material varied, and the purity of the ore varied likewise, it was imperative that time and money were not wasted in bringing large quantities of worthless material to the surface. A system was therefore devised by which the miner was paid according to the value of the amount of ore which he produced. This system was known as the tribute system, and was the predominant form of agreement between this class of labourer and their employers from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Since tributers were paid a proportion of the price which the ore they raised fetched,* when sold their remuneration was affected by changes in the price of copper.

In the first section of this chapter, a static description of these methods of payment will be given, that is a description of how they worked during the period when they were the usual methods of settlement with the mine labourers. In the second section an account will be given of the development of the systems, and their gradual decline in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Such examples as are necessary to the argument will be included in the text, further examples will be provided in an appendix to the chapter.

Tribute and Tutwork

Tutworkers contracted with the agents to drive so many fathoms for an agreed price per fathom. The price varied according to the anticipated difficulty of the ground which was to be driven. It might be soft and workable with handtools, it might be so hard as to require blasting, or it

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*The price per ton of fine copper (after deduction of smelting costs) was known as the Standard, and fluctuated quite markedly. The wages of the working tributer were directly related to this market price.

might be so crumbly as to require constant propping and shoring. Thus there was no fixed rate per fathom appropriate to every mine, or to every part of the same mine. The following table gives an idea of the extent of fluctation. The examples are from 1873, and although the prices are higher than they would have been a hundred years earlier, the range of fluctuation is unlikely to have altered:

"Sinking shafts in soft killas near the surface	£2 - £3
Sinking shafts in soft killas below 20 fathoms	£3 - £4
Sinking shafts in compact killas near surface	£4 - £6
Sinking shafts in compact killas below 20 fathoms	£5 - £8
Sinking shafts in 'fair blasting' ground near the surface	£6 - £20
Sinking shafts in 'fair blasting' ground below 20 fathoms	£10 - £30"

For driving levels as opposed to sinking shafts the rate would be a third less in non-blasting ground, and one half less in blasting ground. The prices are per cubic fathom. Killas is a kind of clay slate, in which the mineral lodes are generally found. (3)

The rate was a matter for agreement between the agents, or captains, and the men, after both had inspected the ground to be driven and arrived at their respective conclusions as to the speed and ease with which it could be driven. The entry in the wages book would be of this form:

"To Richard James and Ptr. for driving adit end

4 fathoms 2 feet at 40/- £8 13s. 4d." (4)

(This example is from the Pay Book of Wheal Towan for 1773).

The tributer also undertook his work under a form of contract:

> "A Cornish tributer is a man who is willing to work certain ground from a certain point in a certain direction for so much of the value ... of the ore he is able to raise." (5)

When a tributer had agreed to work a defined portion of the mine for an agreed percentage of the mineral ore raised from it, the agreement would be as follows:

"Brigan Mine - June 8th 1793.

A pitch from Nancarrow's shaft so far east as to join Amos Nicholl's pitch from the 55 fathom level as deep as the 61 fathom level.

2 men - Thomas Cooking (taker)
till August Sampling - 13s. 4d." (6)

Sampling was the periodic assaying of the value of the ore raised. A pitch was the name given to the measured piece of the mine to be contracted for, and the process of offering the pitch to takers was known as "setting." The above agreement meant that two men had agreed to work the area specified for two months, and were to receive 13s. 4d. in the pound of the value of the ore which they raised. This was rather a high tribute rate, suggesting that the pitch was expected to contain relatively small quantities of ore, or else ore of a low quality. The following example illustrates an agreement in which the amount and value of the ore raised was expected to be more considerable:

"Wheal Rose - December 30th 1798.

A new pitch from the Ladder Winze* as far west as Halebeagle East Shaft, from the back of the level so high as to join Henry Tresize's pitch.

2 men till sampling in Feb. - 4s. 6d.
John Martin - taker
James Williams - taker". (7)

The range from 4s. 6d. to 13s. 4d. was probably the normal range of tribute agreements, although rates as low as 6d. were known, and at one remarkably rich mine pitchs were reported to have been taken at as low a rate as 1d. in the £1.** (8)

Contracts were not usually made with individual miners, but with gangs known as "pares" (sometimes "pairs"). These varied in numerical strength,

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*Winze: a small vertical shaft joining two horizontal levels.

**During a time when conditions at Tin Croft were so good that the Adventurers were making £3,200 a month, a tribute was taken at 4d. in the £1. (Jenkin Mss. to R. Wilbraham, 4th Nov. 1797).

but in tributing, contracts were most often taken by pares of two men, one of whom was named as the taker. In tutwork the pares were normally larger. Six, nine or even twelve being usual numbers. Tutwork being the essential foundation work of the mine, was required to be undertaken throughout the twenty four hours of the day (see following chapter) and accordingly the pares were large enough to divide themselves into relieving shift gangs. The tributers normally worked the eight hour day shift. In some cases, for example when a lode was especially wide, or when the mine desired a rapid rate of ore excavation to improve its financial position before the Account day, bargains might be set to larger pares of tributers who would work a shift system. In general, however, the two man pare, with perhaps the assistance of a boy, was the norm for tribute work.*

In the cases of both types of labour, payment was made to the pare as a whole by the mine, and its division was the responsibility of the pare itself. Although one man could be named as the taker of a contract, there is no evidence to suggest that in the Cornish mines the men operated as other than equal partners.** Cornish mining has no term equivalent to the "butty" of the ~~northern~~ midland coal fields, no suggestion of any class of labourer intermediate between the captains and the working miners. In addition to the full partners who comprised the pare, the pare itself frequently employed boys to aid in subsidiary tasks, such as wheeling the ores, or holding the borer.

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*Examples of the size of pares from Wheal Treasure Smith's Cost Book 1822. (Mss. in C.R.O. D.D.X. 55/16): In February 1822 there were four tutwork pares in the mine, consisting of eight, six, and two of four men each. There were twenty-three tribute pares, four of which consisted of four men, thirteen of two men, and six of one man. The range of prices for tribute was from 5s. 6d. to 12s. 6d.
See also Quarterly Review (1827) p. 84. "The pitches are in most cases taken by two miners."

**The taking of whole mines on tribute by entrepreneurs who worked them with hired labour, was still existent in 1778 when Pryce wrote, but was said to be much less common than agreements directly with the workers. (Pryce p. 189)

Tribute pares chose, and were responsible for the boys who worked with them, including paying their wages. Tutwork pares usually had the boys allocated to them by the captains. From being paid small daily wages at the beginning, the boys as their usefulness increased, were offered half a share in the contract, a transitional stage before becoming fully fledged tributers or tutworkers themselves. At the share out such boys were referred to as "half a man."

In both types of work the bargains were taken up at a form of auction. The day of which was known as "Setting Day." They took place at the end of the usual period of contract. For most of the time, and in most mines, from the last quarter of the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, this period was two months. In the early eighteenth century it was sometimes as long as four months, and from the mid-nineteenth century it became commonly one month. (9)

The auction, sometimes known as the "survey", was held in the open air before the counting house of the mine. For two or three days previously, the captains would have been involved in measuring all the work to be done on tutwork in the shafts and levels, and in carefully viewing the tribute pitches so as to estimate as nearly as possible what each bargain ought to be set at. The men likewise had had the opportunity of inspecting the pitches, and of forming their own estimate of the rate at which they could make wages by working them. On the setting day the men assembled at noon in front of the counting house:

> "The business begins by reading over what is called a general article, or set of rules and conditions subject to which every contract is made, and which article prescribes fines for fraud or neglect in the performance of the work.
>
> When this is read the managing captain generally begins with the tutwork, and puts up a shaft or level declaring the number of men required, and sometimes limiting the extent of the bargain to a certain depth or length. The men who worked it last usually put it up asking frequently double what they mean to take; this they do, not so much in the expectation that it will influence the agents, as with the view of deterring other

> men from opposing them. Offers are then made at lower prices, which go on until no one is inclined to bid less, when the captain throws up a small stone, and declares who is the last offerer. It seldom happens that the price bid is so low as the agents deem equivalent, therefore it is understood that the last man is only entitled to the option of closing the contract upon the terms to be named by the captain; these are immediately proposed, and if refused, are tendered to the others in the order of their offers.
>
> This plan reserves the power to the agents of withholding, in case of combination, while the men though they may not in the first instance bid down to the price they mean to work for, seldom risk a refusal when the captain's offer is made, if they think it near the mark, least others should instantly accept it.
>
> The tribute pitches are set in the same way, the place intended to be worked being described, with a stated number of men, and the offer being made at so much in the pound ..." (10)

This account provided by the mine agent John Taylor in 1814, was the account on which, together with Dr. Barham's report to the Child Labour Commission in 1842, the Victorian social scientists, John Start Mill, Charles Babbage and Henry Mayhew, based their strong commendations of the Cornish system.* It is substantially accurate, but offers only the bare bones of a system which, in practice, was modified by varying degrees of

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*J.S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy (Toronto U.P. edition of Collected Works 1965, pp. 769-70); Charles Babbage, Economy of Manufactures (1832) p. 177; Henry Mayhew, Low Wages : their Causes, Consequences, and Remedies (Nov. 29th to Dec. 20th 1851) p. 43. A discussion of the views of these men appears in a later chapter, (below p.376), but one wonders whether they would have been quite so enthusiastic, if their knowledge had not been second hand. They might have been more cautious had they been familiar with the depths of destitution to which the tribute system was capable of flinging miners. See for example, the poem of John Harris, The Unsuccessful Miner Harris was himself a former tributer:

> "A month was nearly ended,
> And he severe had wrought
> Day after day in darkness,
> And it was all for nought
> The mineral vein had faded
> And now all hope was fled,
> Tomorrow should be pay day
> His children have no bread."
>
> (Wayside Pictures, Hymns and Poems (1874) pp. 158-9)

convention and personal relationships between the captains and the men.

R.M. Ballantyne's account in his novel, Deep Down, succeeds in capturing much more of the incident of setting day.*:

> "Setting day came —— being the first Saturday in the month, and no work was done on that day at Bottalack, for the men were all above ground to have their pitches for the next month fixed, and to receive their wages —— setting day being also pay day.
>
> Some time before the business of the day commenced, the miners began to assemble in considerable numbers in the neighbourhood of the account-house. Very different was their appearance on that occasion from the rusty red fellows who were wont to toil in the dark chambers far down in the depths below the spot where they stood. Their underground dresses were laid aside, and they now appeared in the costume of well off tradesmen ...
>
> The manager laid an open book on the window-sill and from this elevated position, as from a pulpit, he read out the names, positions, etc., of the various 'pitches' that were to be 'set' for the following month. One of the mine-captains stood at his elbow to give any required information —— he and his three brother captains being the men who had gone all over the mine during the previous month, examined the work, measured what had been done by each man or 'pare' of men, knew the capabilities of all miners, and fixed the portion that ought to be offered to each for acceptance or refusal.
>
> The men assembled in a cluster round the window and looked up while Mr. Cornish read off as follows:
>
> 'John Thomas's pitch at back of the hundred and five ... By two men. To extend from the end of the tram-hole, four fathom west, and from back of level, five fathom above.'
>
> John Thomas being present, at once offered 'ten shillings' by which he meant that knowing the labour to be undergone, and the probable value of the ore to be excavated, he thought it worthwhile to continue at that piece of work, or that 'pitch', if the manager would give him ten shillings for every twenty shillings worth of mineral sent to the surface by him; but the captain also knew the ground and the labour that would be required, and his estimate was that eight shillings would be

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*Ballantyne spent some time in a mining village acquiring the background knowledge for this novel. The mine which he describes is not a fictitious one but Botallack Mine in St. Just, famous for its undersea workings.

> sufficient remuneration, a fact which was announced by Mr. Cornish simply uttering the words,
> 'At eight shillings.'
> 'Put her down, s'pose', said John Thomas after a moments consideration ... The pitch was therefore set to John Thomas and another read off.
> 'Jim Hocking's pitch at back of the hundred and ten. By one man. To extend etc.'
> 'Won't have nothing to do with her', said Jim Hocking. Jim had evidently found the work too hard, and was dissatisfied with the remuneration, so he declined, resolving to try his chance in a more promising part of the mine.
> 'Will any one offer for this pitch?' inquired Mr. Cornish.
> Eight and six shillings were immediately named by men who thought the pitch looked more promising than Jim did.
> 'Any one offer more for this pitch?' asked the manager taking up a pebble from a little pile that lay at his elbow, and casting it into the air.
> While that pebble was in flight, any one might offer for the pitch, but the instant it touched the ground, the bargain was held to be concluded with the last bidder. A man named Oats, who had been in an hesitating state of mind, here exclaimed, 'Five shillings'...; next instant the stone fell, and the pitch was set to Oats.' (11)

This account suggests that the process was not in practice one of completely open competition. No one attempted to under bid John Thomas, accepting his right to continue his pitch if he could agree terms with the manager. In the case of the second pitch open competition did result, but only when the tributer who had been working it, declined to renew his bargain. This rested on custom alone, for in theory the agents would have accepted a lower bid had one been forthcoming. No such bid was made, it being a strong convention amongst the miners not to bid against the "old pare." (12) In other words there existed a sort of tacit combination, not to cut the wages too low. In the case of new pitches,* or pitches which the "old pare" declined to renew, then bidding would continue until the lowest offer had

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*In the case of the opening of a new mine all pitches were set at an open auction. An advertisement in the Cornwall Gazette (June 13th 1801) for the Tredaccle Mine (Alternon) invited out of employ miners to attend the mine on the first Monday in July, "when a good opportunity will offer of taking bargains."

been made. Even under these circumstances competition was not entirely unrestricted. Persons who were well established in the mine were given preference over newcomers:

> "It is seldom there is any indiscriminate bidding, or any great scramble at the settings. Men who have obtained a footing in the mine have generally the preference over strangers. The captain has generally his price for each pitch, and if it is a new setting for the same pitch he usually offers it to the party who have already worked it. If they take it the matter is at an end, if not then it is put up ..." (13)

This need to get established, led, especially in times of recession when job opportunities were diminishing, to the practice known as taking "farthing pitches." Thus was the taking of contracts at purely nominal rates of tribute with a view to getting established in the mine. (14) This practice depended on the knowledge that the pare would conventionally be given first refusal of more reasonable terms at the next setting. William Jenkin described such a situation taking place at Tin Croft in 1816:

> "such was the struggle that most of the pitches set that day were taken at too low a price, — and to my surprise two of them were taken for nothing. The reason given was the expectation of being employed the following months, and the hopes of a better price next survey day." (15)

The convention against under cutting the old pare was at its weakest when mines were closing down or contracting their labour force, which meant that displaced miners were arriving at the setting days of other mines and undercutting those already working there. This was especially the case when one vicinity was prosperous when others were depressed:

> "A time of prosperity is sure to cause an influx of strangers to a mining district to the great detriment of the local inhabitants. While the season of prosperity lasts, things generally run on pretty smoothly; but even then, the labouring part of the settled population are materially affected in the price of their labour, the strangers being generally anxious to obtain employment on almost any terms. But when the scale turns; when the standard again drops, causing the general operations to be prosecuted to a very limited extent, and in many instances to be wholly suspended, the

> greater part of the labouring classes are too frequently plunged into a state of destitution and distress. During the late bouyancy in the standard and prosperous state of our mines, the whole mining neighbourhood became literally crammed with strangers from all parts of the country, most of them appear determined to remain, as long as they can obtain either cash or credit. Hence for several months past they have been attending survey after survey, at the different mines "cutting down" the pitches and bargains to such ruinously low prices, that those who engage on them have almost universally failed to obtain a remunerating price for their labour; and in hundreds of instances after working hard for a whole month, they have found themselves pounds per man in debt, their earnings having failed even to pay their costs." (16)

In normal times men who were known to the captains as good workers would get preferential treatment. Since the mine lost from the performance of an inefficient miner even as he did himself, most mine captains were aware that the lowest wages did not necessarily mean the cheapest labour. An inefficient captain could prove disasterous for the success of a mine. A contemporary condemned the management of Great Work in 1795:

> "Some favourite labourers were permitted to take tributes by which some got £40, £50 and £60 per quarter ..." (17)

That such wages could be earned was part of the tribute system, but the accusation here was one of corruption in the granting of pitches. Pryce made similar accusations in 1778:

> "There will never be occasions wanting for bad men to decoy servants, and alienate them from their bounden duty to their masters: accordingly, Takers of the ground by the fathom in sinking, stoping or driving, and likewise takers upon tribute, invite the captains to drink with them upon free cost, at public houses; which leads to a further progress in deceit and corruption, till the incautious captains are seduced from their integrity by the presents of the takers, whom they suffer to mix and manage the ores in such manner as will most conduce to their own advantage;* and to measure the ground which is wrought by the fathom to the loss and injury of the adventurers." (18)

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*The ore mixing which Pryce describes and the Kitting referred to by Jenkin (p. 45) were forms of deceit practiced by the workmen. They are fully described later in the chapter.

Jenkin, a mine steward, wrote in 1796 to one of the Adventurers for whom he operated, and his letter clearly expresses the opinion that pitches should be given to low bidders only when they were known to be reliable workmen:

> "We are promised great gains in N(orth) D(owns) from hence forward —— this certainly would be a good mine in <u>good hands</u>, but I believe there was never a mine worse managed, nor was the process of Kitting ever carried to such a height as I believe it is in N.D., and no great wonder when boys of all sizes and characters are permitted to take pitches on Tribute and cut down and turn out good workmen from places where I am sure the former are not able to spend the ground. Yet they'll find ore, and get better wages than some of the best pickmen in the county can ..." (19)

In general the captains functioned fairly and efficiently, they were more often praised than condemned by contemporary writers. Although it must be kept in mind that there were badly run mines where the old pares were permitted to be undercut by inexperienced miners, since the captains were almost universally chosen from the ranks of the labouring miners, relations between them and the men were rarely hostile. In deciding the rate for tribute or tutwork the captain had to bear in mind the necessity of offering a rate sufficient for the miners to secure adequate wages. It was not in the interest of the investors that a pitch should prove so unprofitable that it was thrown up by the takers before their contract had expired. They were entitled to do this at the end of one month of a two month contract on payment of a fine of £1 a man. The estimation of what constituted adequate wages was low indeed, and depended more on the local average, dependent in its turn on the local ratio of supply to demand in the labour market, rather than on any careful assessment of what constituted a fair wage. (20)

The circumstances would nevertheless arise when the miners would feel that the captain had underestimated the potentiality of a pitch or tutwork bargain, and offer to work it for less than the captain's estimation, as a

witness before a Parliamentary Committee expressed it:

> "The men fancy they know a little more than the agent." (21)

The whole rationale of the system and its appeal to the working miner depended upon the possibility of large returns, as, for example those made at Tin Croft in 1805:

> "The new discovery on Martin's lode is very promising indeed, the lode large and rich. It was set last Friday on tribute for one month, three men only having 5d. out of the pound. If they get wages in that price they must raise nearly £1,800 worth or ore in the month which is very improbable; therefore I fear it will prove an evil to the Adventurers that the men have taken it at so low a tribute. The Captain's estimation was 1/- in the pound and I wish the men had that price, but there was no stopping them in the survey, so eager were they to have that pitch." (22)

When a contract ran for two months, the right to throw it up on payment of a fine of a pound a man at the end of the first month, (23) was expensive at the end of a disasterous month, but was preferable to working for another month with no prospect of making wages. Jenkin provides an example of such a situation occurring in 1798:

> "The lode in that place is so good, that the labourers have engaged to break, rise and cleanse the ore for only 6d. out of the pound ... But rich as it is, I fear the men will not get wages in that price. They ought to have 1s. instead of sixpence, but 'twas their own fault in cutting it so low." (24)

Later he reported:

> "I hear the men have thrown up their contract and the same pitch is set out again for 12d. out of the pound, which is thought a fair price." (25)

To throw up a pitch before the first month was up, could be regarded as a breach of contract which was in the last resort enforceable in the law courts. (26) In any case monthly contracts began to replace two-monthly contracts in the nineteenth century, and would appear to have become universal by the eighteen-eighties. (27) This meant that the tributer was in receipt of a more regular income, but it was a mixed blessing in that if a pare should find good ore while working at a favourable tribute rate, they would have

only a month or so in which to profit from it, before their rate was adjusted at the next setting. This wish to be able to re-adjust the rate, before too high wages were made at the expense of profits was a strong motivating factor behind the introduction of monthly contracts. Accurate prediction of the potentiality of a pitch was brought to a fine art by the captains and men in most circumstances, but there would always be times when the lode would unexpectedly disappear, or substantially narrow without prior indication. A pitch might equally well change unexpectedly in favour of the takers:

> "... within the last six or seven days two poor men working in a part of the mine, where the lode was very hard and poor, they suddenly cut into a bunch of rich copper ore, very soft and consequently easy to break, the poor fellows having by their contract 12/- out of the pound for their labour of all the ores they can break within a certain limit, they scarcely allow themselves time to eat and sleep since they first discovered the ore.
>
> Their time expires at the end of the month, and if the load (sic) continues so good as it is now in sight, I expect they will get a hundred pounds each for themselves for two weeks labour — and that the same piece of ground will be taken next month for less than one shilling in the pound." (28)

The possibility of earning such wages in 1804* goes a long way towards explaining the attachment of the miners to the system. True it often allowed them bare wages, it frequently allowed them less, and it sometimes allowed them nothing at all, but many months of frustration were borne in the constant expectation of the fabulous strike just around the corner.

Neither the tributers nor the tutworkers received the full amount of the contracted agreement. Substantial deductions were made. Having taken a pitch or tutwork bargain, the pare opened an account with the mine, wherein they were debited the value of all the tools, candles, gunpowder, and other articles which they required to undertake their labour. These essential

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*See also Jenkin to A.M. Hunt (26th Oct. 1802):

> A pare of four tributers had worked for one month of a two months contract and had got nothing from a poor pitch. They tried to get out of the second month but were told that if they did so they would not be employed at the mine in the future. Unwillingly they continued work and suddenly broke into good ore, earning them £50 a man by the time their contract expired. (Jenkin Mss.)

supplies had to be purchased from the mine agents, and as a deliberate policy the men were charged substantially above market prices for the articles. The reason given for this monopolization of supplies was that there was a need to ensure that supplies were of sufficient quality. This has a certain validity. It is not difficult to imagine the dangers involved if the miners were to use cheap gunpowder supplied by irresponsible dealers. But while this explains the monopoly it does not justify the charging of excessive prices. These were justified on the grounds that it was necessary to prevent the men from trading the candles with local shopkeepers, and there were reports of candles being among the takings of public houses in the mining districts. As a justification it is one which reflects little credit on a system of delayed wage payment which left the men too often dependent on local credit.* Candles and gunpowder were the most regular of the deductions, being expendable supplies which had to be purchased at the beginning of every contract. Tools, ropes and all types of equipment were also purchased from the mine and deducted from wages, but these were more lasting items which required only periodic renewal. (A full list of possible deductions is given in an appendix).

Deductions were made for the payment of the mine doctor, retained to provide medical treatment for the miners. This deduction from about 2d. to 6d. a week was universally made and dated from the beginning of the eighteenth century, Pryce describing it in 1778 as at least sixty years old. (29) Deductions were also made for the sick club, which supported miners injured in accidents, but not those who fell ill. This fund was administered entirely by the mine, an assumption of responsibility which led to the fund being regarded as a capital asset of the mine and in the event of a mine closure,

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*Some indication of the profits made on mine supplies in 1864 can be given. Dolcoath made a profit of £531 on candles and £294 on powder. The equivalent profits for Huel Clifford were £399 and £241, for Par Consols, £425 and £528, and for Prosper United, £500 and £557. (L.L. Price, "West Barbary", Journal of the Statistical Society of London (1888) p. 538.

it was not refunded to the miners. (30) On at least one occasion control of this fund was used as a weapon to discipline relectant miners into accepting new safety regulations. (31) The adventurers justified the situation by claiming that demands on the fund frequently exceeded the aggregate of workers contributions, and it had to be supplemented from profits. In some cases this was probably true, but it is understandable that there should have been a good deal of dissatisfaction that a fund to which contributions were compulsary should be regarded as a capital asset of the mine. It should be remembered that when the independence of the tributer and tutworker are being considered, that the control of the sick fund and the system of subsist payments, meant that in the field of social security the Cornish miner was very far from independent.

When wages were paid every two months, or at best every month with a month in hand, some system of wage advancement or else well established credit facilities was essential to subsist the miners. A method of wage advancement known as subsist developed. Under this system a sum of up to £2 per man a month was advanced to a pare, to be recovered at the end of the contract period from the pare's earned amount. Frequently this meant that after an unsuccessful month, the men were in debt to the mine. This was a debt which was not always expected to be repaid, but there was obviously a limit to the amount of bad debt which a pare on tribute would be allowed to run up. Tutworkers earning regular wages by the mid-nineteenth century were by that time only infrequently allowed subsist, but their gamble was a much smaller one. (32) In some senses subsist can be viewed as providing a sort of minimum wage at subsistence level, but it was highly selective in operation, being more readily grant d to proved workers than to newcomers. Since it was a favour rather t an a right, it could be used with discrimination, as it was in 1838 en it was refus to workers known to spend time in alehouses.(33)

In a good mine under a good captain the system probably worked well, but the agents clearly would be unlikely to disadvantage the shareholders by being

open handed in the amount of subsist which they were prepared to advance to a pare whose exp ctation of good returns from their pitch was not high. (34) A system which permitted men to labour for two months unde life-destroying physical conditions, and emerge in debt to the mine clearly left much to be desired. More often the tributer was left deserving a decent wage than he received one. It was a dependence on favour for a subsistence which should have been theirs by right.

The tribute had also to bear the cost of raising, dressing, and preparing the ore. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they contracted directly with surface workers to perform these tasks, but later the mines began to take over the responsibility for the payment of the dressers etc., and deductions were made for these payments. Deductions were also made for the blacksmith who by the mid-nineteenth century was usually permanently employed at the mine.

When all these deductions had been made, the amount actually received by the men was very different from their theoretical share of the ore which they had raised, or the fathoms they had driven. The following example from Wheal Towan Pay Book provides an illustration of the process in respect of an eighteenth century tutwork pare:

"February 1773

To Richard James and Ptrs. for driving adit			
4 fathoms lft at 45s.	£9	7s.	6d.
deduct candles - 2 doz.		15s.	6d.
gunpowder		2s.	0d.
Doctor			8d.
	£8	9s.	4d.
Subsist	£3	13s.	6d.
Balance of:	£4	15s.	10d." (35)

The pare was employed in driving an adit, a task at which it continued for several months. In March 1773 they appear to have broken into easier ground for their rate was cut to 40s. a fathom:

"March 1773

Richard James and Ptrs. for driving adit end 4 fathoms 2 feet at 40s.	£8	13s.	4d.
deduct		6s.	6d.
	£8	6s.	10d.
Subsist	£3	3s.	0d.
	£5	3s.	10d.
Short paid			4d.
	£5	4s.	2d."

In January the pare's earnings had been £5 6s. 4d. leaving a balance after deductions of £2 13s. 10d. In April the balance was £6 14s. 3d. Another tutwork pare in the same mine, was employed in sinking the sump for the engine, and the account for October 1772 was:

"October 1772

Stephen Williams and Ptrs.			
Sinking sump	£39	16s.	0d.
Subsist	£ 6	6s.	0d.
Materials	£ 1	14s.	2d.
Balance:	£31	15s.	10d."

The amount of subsist paid suggests that this pare was twice as large as the first, nevertheless the earnings for October 1772 are about five times as high as the best figures of Richard James's pare over the first four months of 1773. They must have bargained well for October, for although the account entry does not give the rate per fathom in this case, we may be fairly certain that it was high enough to have been re-adjusted at the next setting, for the pare's November balance was only £16 19s. 11d. Indeed individual shares might have diminished even more, for a rise in subsist paid from six to seven guineas suggests that an extra man may have been added.

For tribute accounts the following examples from the St. Ives Consols Tribute Pay Book for 1860, indicate the pattern of payment. (36) (Further examples are supplied in an appendix).

"April 1860

Samuel Thomas and Partners

Ore raised	£8	3s.	5d.
at 9s.	£3	13s.	6d.
Subsist	£2	2s.	0d.
Materials	£1	13s.	6d.

No balance"

The pare must have entertained hopes of their pitch, for they took it again in the following month for the marginally higher rate of 10s. in the pound. May showed signs of improvement:

Ore raised	£21	6s.	0d.
at 10s.	£10	13s.	0d.
Materials	£ 2	19s.	0d.
Dr. and Club		4s.	0d.
Balance:	£ 7	10s.	0d.

No subsist was received in this month, but their prospects were clearly improving for in June the captain was prepared to advance them £4 in subsist. In that month the pitch began to pay really well:

Ore raised	£57	7s.	6d.
at 10s.	£26	19s.	5d.
Subsist	£ 4	0s.	0d.
Materials	£ 5	2s.	5d.
Dr. and Club		4s.	0d.
Balance:	£17	13s.	0d.

Thus over a period of thirteen weeks, the pare received £25 3s. 0d. plus £6 2s. 0d. advanced as subsist. The average weekly earnings were slightly over £2 8s. 0d. for a pare most probably consisting of two to four men.

The earnings of another pare in the same mine show a similar degree of fluctuation:

"April 1860

William Daniel Quick

Ore raised	£23	13s.	0d.
at 13s. 2d.	£15	12s.	8d.
Subsist	£ 3	0s.	0d.
Materials	£ 2	12s.	2d.
Dr. and Club		2s.	0d.
Balance:	£ 9	18s.	6d."

In May and June the pare's fortunes declined, the balances being £4 11s. 1d., and 19s. 10d. respectively. Including subsist the pares earnings over the three months totalled £21 9s. 3d.

The earnings of both sorts of labourers were clearly subject to this fluctuation, but the tributer's gamble was by far the bigger one. A correspondent in the Morning Chronicle wrote in 1849:

> "It is the fitful character of his earnings that justifies the remark made to me by one very competent to decide, that where one hears of a tributer having 14s. or 15s. a week, it is seldom that he can be put down as so well off as an agricultural labourer with constant work at 10s." (37)

The Rev. S. Shaw who visited the county in 1788, described the system as:

> "The merest lottery in the world, more so than the hop trade; sometimes they can earn £20 per month, per week, per day, at others not twenty farthings. One lucky adventure will soon gain an independent fortune; another unsuccessful tho' flattering attempt, may sink it to the lowest ebb, nay even to the bitterest distress. Thus we find the generality of these inhabitants wafted from time to time on the variable waves of prosperity and adversity."* (38)

This fluctuation meant that there was a considerable variation in the wages which different tributers might be earning in the same mine at the same time. A writer in 1834 combatting the prevailing notion of that time that tributers were generally in a distressed state, stated that at the two mines of Great St. George and Wheal Prudence, the average wage of the tributers was

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*See also Pryce (Mineralogia Cornubiensis (1778) p. 175):

> "It is an aphorism in mining, that 'A tinner has nothing to lose'; but upon tribute or searching for tin upon the mere strength of his labour, he puts himself in the way of fortune to enrich him by one lucky hit. It is said 'A tinner is never broke till his neck is broke'; for though he may lose all his labour this month upon tribute, the next may amply repay all his loss with profit."

An interesting example of the vicissitudes of the tributer's fortunes is recorded in the local press in 1840. A farmer at Perranzabuloe apprehended a tributer stealing swill from his pig trough to feed his family. With commendable humanity, the farmer loaned the miner some money, which he was able to repay with ease on his next pay day. (West Briton 15th May 1840).

£4 a month. (39) A person acquainted with the two mines replied pointing out how unrealistic the average was. Firstly he suggested that the average should have been £3 10s., since the first writer had not taken into account a dressing charge of 10s. per man, but more importantly he pointed out that the total wage of £700 for two hundred tributers was divided in reality in a way which made a straight forward arithmetical mean wage totally misleading. In June, one of the months in question, £160 of the £700 had been earned by four tributers. The average of the remaining 196 tributers was therefore only £2 6s. after deduction of the dressing charge. In July six men had earned £92, and so the average of the remaining 194 tributers had only been £2 13s. (40)

The tributers referred to the sudden great gain in which they lived in anticipation, as a "start" or "sturt". The writer in the Morning Chronicle in 1849, wondered that such an unsettled form of remuneration should be pursued at all, yet there was little doubt of the miners' preference for it. The tributer, it was said, would be on the verge of starvation before he would undertake tutwork. (41) This was an exaggeration. Movement between the two types of labour was more frequent than some contemporary writers suggest. Nevertheless there were many tributers who would not undertake tutwork if any sort of hopeful tributing were available. A good part of this relectance was due to status considerations. The tributers as the men who raised the actual ore regarded themselves as the miners proper, and even the most careful of tributers might see the difference in mode of payment as basic to his superior status:

> "He was a tributer, and tributers look with as great a contempt upon the tutmen, as the tutmen do upon the surface labourers." (42)

Although there were no theoretical restrictions on entry into the ranks of the tributers, competence in estimating the potentiality of a pitch, and skill in excavating the ore from the dead rock, were prerequisites of success. Such skills could only be learned from experience. It has been

mentioned above that the underground pares were usually completed by the addition of a boy or two to perform subsidiary tasks, which boys gradually assumed full partner status. Since in tribute work the boys were usually chosen by the men themselves, it was usual for fathers to chose sons, or at least close relatives. This situation resembled that of the Lancashire cotton mills, where even in the factory environment, skills still tended to be passed from father to son. (43) In practice there was a degree of restriction of entry into the ranks of the tributers, for in general the boys who were most favourably situated to acquire the essential skills would tend to be those selected by the established tributers.

Status considerations apart, it seems that many miners with the necessary skills preferred the tribute system. Tutwork earnings were much more stable, but on the average tutworkers were less well paid, although given the comparative steadiness of their income, it is arguable whether they were worse off. It is true that the hours of labour of the tutworker were more rigid than those of the tributer, but in practice the tributers freedom was largely illusionary, for it would be seldom that he could obtain a pitch on terms so advantageous as not to demand constant and industrious application if he were to make satisfactory wages. Such indeed, from the employers' point of view, was the rationale of the system.

The demand for the two types of labour was not constant. During periods of optimism when the price of copper or tin was high enough to bring marginal mines into operation, and to encourage existing mines to break new ground, there would be a heavy demand for tutworkers. In times of contraction them tutworkers would be the first to be laid off. In favourable times tribute rates might, due to lack of competition, be so high as to encourage labourers who were normally tutworkers to try their luck, at other times they might be so low as to permit only the most skilled and shrewd of the men to make wages.

Many miners must during their working lives have worked at both kinds of labour. A mine captain told the commission of 1842, quite explicitly that he

had, (44) and the "typical" miner described in the Cornish Banner in 1846, also tried both types as circumstances dictated. (45) In any case the number of unsuccessful months which a tributer could survive was clearly limited, since subsist was unlikely to be for long advanced to pares whose returns were constantly low.

The earnings of the tutworkers had their fluctuations:

> "Much more steady than the tributers, but there is a good deal of difference there, when you set a bargain, you set a price according to what you think they ought to have a fathom, or what they ought to drive in one month. If they do not work, or the ground proves unfavourable, of course they do not get as much as you calculate upon, but nine times out of ten they get their £3 or 3 guineas a month." (46)

A witness in 1864 expressed the opinion, that any "prudent, good miner" at least once or twice during his life time, had the opportunity of getting forty or fifty pounds as a "start" in a month or two. (47) He was explicitly referring to tributers, for tutworkmen were said to have "no chance" of these starts. (48) In the case of tributers such windfalls might well be swallowed up by debts, if they followed an extended period of bad luck, but the great attraction of the start was that it enabled the tributer to lease a small acreage of land and build his own cottage:

> "If they have managed to live without getting into debt, when they get this start, the first thing they do is to build a house." (48)

Such a house and its accompanying plot of ground enabled the miner to contribute useful produce towards his subsistence.

Starts could be well above £50. John Harris, a tributer at Dolcoath, received such a start at the beginning of his married life:

> "For the first ten months of our married life, fortune was against me so that my earnings amounted to no more than tenpence a day. Then the tide turned, Providence blessed my labours, and I soon became the owner of two-hundred pounds." (50)

A mine captain describing the fortunes of an old tributer at North Roskear in 1864, indicated how a tributer might amass a comfortable basis of economic security:

> "We have an old man at North Roskear, a first rate old man, who has been working here for thirty years; the last two years he has always been speculating, and has done badly. I said to him the other day, 'You are doing badly'. 'Yes', said he, 'I never had such a long run before, but I shall make it up again soon'. I said, 'You have not done badly upon the whole, you have been here from a boy'. He is worth £200 or £300 probably; he has one or two cottages, and keeps a cow and so on; we never let him go on less than £2 5s. a month, though for a long time he has not earned any money." (51)

This old tributer was fortunate. He was held in high esteem by the captain, who was prepared to advance him subsist even after a long run of low returns. Such was not always the situation of the tributer, a less well established miner might well find no subsist forthcoming if his lack of success caused a loss of faith in his ability to make finds which would enrich both himself and the adventurers. He might even find himself turned away from the mine and given no opportunity to renew his contract. There was no contract binding longer than the duration of the bargain itself. Either party was free to terminate the arrangement at the end of that time. Unlike his counterparts in some of the coalfields, the Cornish miner possessed in theory unrestricted freedom of movement between mines. However as we have seen, a long stay in the same mine, if it were a well run one, had undoubted advantages since the question of establishment and good relations with the captain were so important.

It should not be imagined that everything about the tribute and tutwork systems was ideal from the point of view of management. Both were open to a measure of deceitful practices. This was only a minor problem with tutwork, for although Pryce suggests that captains were sometimes bribed to over-measure completed work, (52) this was only a marginal problem confined to smaller and less well managed mines.

The tribute system, however, was open to peculiar forms of deceit and industrial larceny, which had to be carefully guarded against. So far as cheating went, possibilities were extensive. The simplest form of cheating

was the extraction of ore from beyond the prescribed bounds of a pitch.* This practice was not only fraudulent, but could mean the stealing of ore from comrades who had contracted to work neighbouring pitches. Such cases were frequently brought before the Quarter Sessions, where sentences of six months imprisonment were commonly handed out. The following case from the April sessions of 1847 will serve as an illustration. Two young tributers, Thomas Hicks and Francis Gill, were charged with stealing ore from William Martin, a fellow tributer at United Hills in Illogan. The accused had taken a pitch at twelve shillings in the pound, Martin had taken one at eleven shillings, but had broken into good ore so that his pitch was expected to be reset at eight or nine shillings. Experienced miners from the mine, testified that amongst the ore the accused claimed to have raised from their own pitch, was some of a quality which could only have been obtained from the good bunch into which Martin had broken. In the face of overwhelming testimony to this effect, the accused were found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment. In such cases conviction usually depended upon the captain's charge being supported by the testimonies of experienced tributers well acquainted with the particular mine.** (53) Working beyond the bounds of a pitch did not necessarily imply stealing ore from other miners. Neighbouring pitches might not have been set and it is further obvious that certain

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*See for example the case before the Sessions court in 1842, when two tributers at Carn Brea were found guilty of removing ore from beyond the bounds of their pitch. The captain found them "concealing themselves in a part of the mine which was not set to any one ..." (Cornwall Gazette 1 th March, 1842).

**Cases of stealing from mines involving supplies were often punished by a flogging as well as imprisonment. See Cornwall Gazette 8th Jan. 1831 for an example of two men being sentenced to 14 days and a whipping for stealing brass wire sieves. Similar cases in the same paper 18th July, 1829, and in West Briton 10th April, 1835. See also the minute books of Quarter Sessions e.g. No. 6 (1788-1799) p. 7 (17th July, 1788) for case of stealing from Dolcoath Mine of iron worth 6d. The accused was found guilty and sentenced:

> "To be confined to hard labour in the Bridewell of the County 'till the 2nd of August next and that he be then conveyed to Dolcoath mine and be there stript naked from the middle upwards and whipt till his body be bloody."

The Sessions Minute Books preserved in the County Record Office, contain many similar cases.

portions of the underground workings could not be removed since they were required as support for the roof. Pares were sometimes tempted to steal ore from areas which were not being worked, and in these cases they were charged with stealing ore which was the property of the adventurers.* (54)

More difficult to guard against than straight forward cases of ore stealing was the practice known as "kitting". Although this term was sometimes used to mean simply ore stealing, it more often was descriptive of other forms of deceit practised by tributers. One form was the agreement of two different pares working at different tribute rates, to mix their ores underground. If one rate was 13s. and the other 5s., ores from the second pitch would be presented by the taker of the first pitch in the expectation that he would then receive 13s. in the pound for ore which had only been set at 5s. the profit from the fraud being shared between the two pares. (55) Such exchanges, taking place underground, were very difficult to guard against. The fact that they do not appear before the courts with the frequency of ore stealing, does not necessarily imply that the practice was less common. It was probably more often dealt with by dismissal, attaching a stigma which would make it difficult for the offenders to find work in other mines in the district. Thus we find William Jenkin writing in 1809:

> "Altho' we might fail in bringing these men to a legal conviction, yet I hope the Agents in every copper mine in the County will faithfully unite in repelling those men from obtaining employment under them either as tributers or otherwise." (56)

Such fraud did not to the same extent involve the condemnation of comrades as did stealing from fellows, and so it may have been more difficult

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*See for example the case of William Kettle, (Cornwall Gazette 29th October, 1841) who was found guilty at Quarter Sessions of stealing copper ore from the adventurers at United Mines, Gwennap, where he was a tributer, and sentenced to three months hard labour. The captain had found several large stones of high quality ore when he examined the prisoner's pile. Although Kettle maintained that he had broken them in his own pitch, and could show where, he was only able to produce stones which were dissimilar in both size and quality. Ore which did match was found about 90 fathoms from the pitch. The ore in the accused's pitch was stated to be worth about £5 a ton, the ore in dispute was worth about £15.

to secure the supporting testimonies necessary for a conviction.

There was a second form of fraud. If tributers working at a high rate of tribute broke into good ore near the end of their contracted period, they were aware that their success would without doubt lead to their rate being lowered at the next setting. In such situations the practice was known for pares to conceal their best ore underground, and give a false impression of the value of the pitch. The good ore could then be brought up the next month when the contract had been renewed on the same favourable terms. (57)

It has been suggested that cases of fraud would be often dealt with by the mine by dismissal or forfeit of earnings. This latter sanction gave rise to an interesting case in the Stannaries Court in January 1840. A tribute pare, father and son, sued the purser of Wheal Budnick for the recovery of £11 7s. 3d. due as tribute for four weeks on December 27th 1838, for ore raised at ten shillings in the pound. For the defence it was claimed that the pare had forfeited their earnings by their breach of the fourth article of the mine regulations directed against "fraudulent and irregular working." The jury were to decide whether the plaintiffs had or had not "duly worked." The captain had been observing the pare and had come to the conclusion that they were only working irregularly at their pitch, and that the ore which they had presented at the end of their contract was too large in quantity to have been raised by the pare themselves. He claimed that they had presented ore which had been raised in a neighbouring pitch by another tributer. The plaintiffs had to prove that they had worked regularly and had raised all the ore which they had presented. Three other miners were called as witnesses. The first stated that the pare had broken about three fathoms of ground, which he would have thought was a "pretty good month's work for two men;" the second testified that he had seen the plaintiffs at work regularly; and the third that he had frequently seen them at work in a "miner like manner." The evidence on both sides was inconclusive, and in the end the jury decided that the pare had not fully proved their claim, and gave verdict in favour of the mine. (58)

The prevalence of various forms of stealing and fraud by tributers, led in 1839 to insertion of a special clause in an Act of Parliament to clarify the situation.*

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*2 and 3 Victoria Cap LVIII The relevant clause is given in an Appendix. 4

References

(1) E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-load in Nineteenth Century Industry', Labouring Men (1965) p. 353
(2) ibid. p. 353, quoting A.T. Ponson, Traite de L'exploitation des mines de houille (Liege 1854) iv. p. 120
(3) L.L. Price, 'West Barbary; or notes on the System of Work and Wages in the Cornish Mines' Journal of Statistical Society vol. 50 (1888) p. 554
(4) Wheal Towan Pay Book (Mss. in C.R.O.)
(5) Select Committee on Stannaries Act (1869) Amendment Bill P.P. 1887 vol. xii p. 347 Q. 32 (Subsequently P.P. 1887)
(6) A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, The Cornish Miner (1927) p. 136
(7) ibid. p. 137
(8) A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, 'Tributers - Their Uses and Abuses', Report of Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society (1930) p. 375
(9) Pryce (1778) refers to the existence of four month contracts (opp. cit. p. 189). While the reports of the Mine Commissioners of 1864 (P.P. 1864) and of the Select Committee on the Stannaries (P.P. 1887) make it clear that one month was the norm by those dates.
(10) J. Taylor, 'On the Economy of the Mines of Devon and Cornwall' Transactions of the Geological Society of London (1814) p. 319
(11) R.M. Ballantyne, Deep Down. A Tale of the Cornish Mines (1869) pp. 267 and 271-2
(12) P.P. 1842 (Children) Minutes of Evidence p. 833. But note that the witness claims that the convention was stronger in some districts than others.
(13) Morning Chronicle 24th Nov. 1849, 'The Mines and Miners of Cornwall'
(14) ibid. loc. cit.
(15) Jenkin Mss. to C. Carpenter, 5th August 1816
(16) Cornwall Gazette 19th January 1838
(17) Mss. Journal of Christopher Wallis, Oct. 1795, p. 140
(18) Pryce p. 175
(19) Jenkin Mss. to Richard Phillips 15th Feb. 1796
(20) P.P. 1887 p. 365 Q. 218
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The Development of the Tribute and Tutwork Systems

So far the tribute and tutwork systems have been described as they operated at the peak period of the Cornish mining industry. The picture thus far presented has been a static one. It is necessary to add some account of the development of the systems: their evolution in the eighteenth century, and their gradual decline in the latter half of the nineteenth century, giving way to a more usual time wage system.

For the purpose of arguments advanced elsewhere in this study, it needs to be established that the methods of wage payment described in the previous section, can be said to have influenced the attitudes and responses of the labouring miners to industrial life and conditions from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. What must be shown is that the two systems were the predominant forms of wage agreement with the labourers until at least 1850.

It has already been suggested that the increasing capitalisation of the mining industry demanded a division of the labour force into men who raised the actual ore, and those who drove levels and sunk shafts. Logically it is to be expected that the distinctive methods of wage payment would develop alongside this specialisation. Once the demands of productive efficiency dictated the emergence of specialist ore raising miners and a system of payment devised to ensure maximum output from them, it followed that some system of payment had also to be developed to pay miners who were not raising ore. Given the prevailing opinion that payment by results secured better production figures than time wages, it was logical to pay men who drove dead ground by the fathom.

It is the tribute system which seems to follow the most logical line of development from the medieval organisation of the tin mining industry. The surface resemblance between the tributer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the free miners of the middle ages, has tended to obscure the fact that there was no unbroken line of descent. The labour-employing

entrepreneur had become the dominant organizational figure in the Cornish mining industry by the sixteenth century. The labouring miner working as a direct contractor did not appear until the eighteenth. He was essentially a product of the development of large scale capital-heavy mining. (For this reason it is misleading to characterise Cornish industrial organisation as "archaic", as a modern historian has done). (1) So far as the working miner was concerned, as G.R. Lewis demonstrated, there was a period, roughly from the fifteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when he was a labourer hired on daily or monthly wages. (2)

In medieval times mines were commenced under one or more working adventurers, who, leasing the land from its owners, worked it themselves as free miners, possibly employing a few labourers where the extent of their operations called for it. By the sixteenth century, and probably even earlier, another type of organisation had grown into existence alongside the working adventurers. Carew, writing at the turn of the sixteenth century, distinguished two types of adventurer:

> "... the partners may be either such tinners as work on their own behalf, or such adventurers as put in hired labourers." (3)

he goes on to remark that the "hirelings" stand at certain wages either "by the day" or "for the year." At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the historian Tonkin describes working miners as being wage labourers commonly employed on a monthly basis. (4)

By thi time non-working adventurers were not themselves direct employers of labour. The practice had evolved of granting working rights to an entrepreneur who contracted to receive a proportion of the mine's produce, and was responsible for the employment of such labour as was necessary. The practice was known as setting at tribute, but it was the setting of a whole mine at tribute to a single contractor.

The development of copper mining, and the increasing depths of the tin mines from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, involved heavy

capital investment, and adventurers whose investments were now considerably larger were less willing to entrust the whole of a mine to a single contractor. When mining had been simply a matter of providing labour and tools, then a single contractor had been sufficient to work the mine. The increasing depth and extent of mines, consequent upon technological advances in draining, meant that only the shallowest of mines could be worked without heavy capital investment. What was called for was a system of labour which would maintain productive efficiency and at the same time ensure that profits went more directly to the adventurers. The tribute system evolved to meet these requirements.

Just when it became usual for the labouring miner to bid for tribute pitch s on his own behalf is difficult to establish. Two pieces of important evidence suggest that it had become usual by 1760. The French mineralogist Gabriel Jars described the organization of Cornish mining in the 1760's and from his description it is clear that a dual system was in operation; contractors still working mines with hired labour, but alongside them the working miners were themselves contracting directly:

> "L'usage etabli dans toutes les mines, est de donner l'extraction du minerai par enterprise; les entrepreneurs ont des ouvriers a leur gages qui travaillent sous leurs ordres; quelques-uns sont ouvriers eux-memes." (5)

This agrees with the description in Pryce's Mineralogia Cornubiensis published in 1778, but regarded as having been researched some years earlier. After describing the setting of a whole mine at tribute, he goes on to remark:

> "it is much more common, and has always been the case in large mines, to set several parts of them in small portions of ground called pitches." (6)

Elsewhere he makes it clear that the working miner as a taker of pitches was already a familiar sight in the industry. At no time does he refer to it as an innovation. He mentions dishonest captains conniving "at the impositions of the c mmon men" in allowing them to mix ores etc. (my italics). (7) Similarly in the following extract he can only be referring to labouring

miners, not to contractors hiring wage labour, judging by the wages which he mentions:

> "I, therefore, reckon a Tinner upon tribute, if he can clear thirty shillings monthly, with the chance annexed of gaining four times as much, is better off than a captain at forty shillings without any further chance." (7)

Pryce was also familiar with tutwork:

> "It is a good and customary way for the owners to set their dead ground ... to be sunk, driven, stoped or cut down by the fathom: but if there is no choice in respect of having the ore clean, or the like, they set it to be sunk, driven, stoped or cut down upon Tut: and in such case the Miners take what they term a Tut-bargain; that is a piece or part of unmeasured ground, by the lump, for such a price as can be agreed upon, expressing the situation and supposed dimensions of the ground." (8)

There is a certain difficulty here. Pryce appears to be distinguishing between takers of the ground by the fathom, and tutworkers. He is in fact distinguishing between a measured piece of ground which is offered at so much per fathom, i.e. a set task priced according to its dimensions, and a tut-bargain where the ground set is unmeasured in the first instance, and the men are paid at an agreed rate per fathom for the work which they have accomplished during the period of contract, which work is measured at the end of the period. Pryce makes what he understands by tutwork clearer in a succeeding paragraph:

> "... everyone knows that a labourer employed for daily hire, will not execute that quantum of labour for his master, that he will upon his own risk and account; and therefore, it is profitable for the Mine owners, to set all their work upon Tut, that can with propriety be so set; and it is likewise an incitment to the industrious Tinner, to acquire additional gain consistent with a good conscience, and his duty to his employers." (8)

The examples given in the preceeding section from the Wheal Towan pay book show a mine fully familiar with, and operating the tutwork system in the early 1770's, and Hamilton Jenkin provides an example from Wheal Busy in 1756, at which mine it was decided to "sink a whim shauft (sic) by the fathom." Two pares of men offered, one for £7 per fathom, and the other for £4, the

latter was naturally accepted. (9)

The adoption of the system was only logical once it was decided that a method of payment by results was dictated by productive efficiency.

The importance of the lines of development of both the tribute and tutwork methods which have been traced is that they demonstrate that neither class of labourer was the direct descendent of the medieval free miner. In both cases they were men who had become upgraded from wage labour status to contract directly with the owners. On the other hand there was no doubt about the essential free status of both kinds of labour. At the end of a period of contract they were quite free to move to another mine, as they were equally free not to accept work if they disapproved of the terms offered. The employers likewise were under no obligation to continue to employ miners. Although it has been shown above that there was undoubted advantages in becoming established in a particular mine, turnover in the nineteenth century was rapid enough for mines to employ a system of keeping wages a month in hand in order to ensure at least a degree of labour stability. (10)

The subsequent development of the tribute and tutwork systems is as involved as their initial development. But it is clear that they remained the predominant forms of wage agreement until the mid-nineteenth century, and that their decline thereafter was a gradual one.

A major problem is that they were never at any time universally adopted. There had always been situations in which the employment of day labour was feasible and was accordingly adopted. There were also occasions when lodes as well as dead ground were set at tut. (Usually when lodes were so rich, that the Adventurers wished to reserve a greater share of the profit for themselves).

Nevertheless these were exceptions. It is noticeable that none of the writers on Cornish mining, noticed the existence of day labour underground. This applies to the description in the Quarterly Review (1827) that in the Morning Chronicle (1849), and to J.Y.R. Watson's Compendium of British

Mining (1843) which mentions time-wages only in connexion with surface tasks. The conclusion must be that although day labour underground did exist it was minimal in extent before the mid-nineteenth century. Samuel Drew in an account published in 1824, a resident of the county and a former child labourer at the mines, had the knowledge to support his statement that although daily wages were sometimes paid, the tutwork and tribute systems were more general. (11)

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the system was being modified from two directions. Lodes were being increasingly set at tut, and dead ground work was being undertaken by day labourers. Both of these tendencies may have been creeping in from the early nineteenth century, but the bulk of the evidence suggests that they operated to only a limited extent before the third quarter. The Mining Journal in 1836, reported of the miners raising ore:

> "latterly in some mines the contrary practice (to tribute) has prevailed, and the lode is stoped at so much per fathom." (12)

But this situation was said to be rare. In 1842, the agent at the United Mines reported that almost all the underground work was there performed by tutworkers (13) Dr. Barham in his report in the same year states:

> "The relative numbers of the different classes vary exceedingly. The tribute system in some mines predominates in others the tutwork; and in some instances even the ore is raised on the owners' account." (14)

Barham's tone suggests that the last was a rare situation.

The underground labour force at Fowey Consols in 1842, consisted of 338 tributers, 350 tutworkers, and 140 day labourers underground.(14) Watson in 1843 states that of a hundred mine labourers, thirty would be tributers, twenty tutworkers, twenty-five boys, and fifteen labourers. (15)

It is not until the eighteen-sixties that one can talk of a really significant inroad being made on the system. The Mine Commissioners of 1864 state that "Miners are divided into tributers and tutworkmen", and make no

mention of the employment of day labour underground. What is brought out by the evidence before this Commission, however, is that lodes were being increasingly set at tut:

> "In the event of a rich lode being discovered it is frequently worked by tutwork." (16)

The agents had become more cautious in setting tribute pitches, and had become more expert in assessing their potential. (17) From the point of view of the tributer this improved geological knowledge lengthened the odds against a start, and made tributing a more risky and less attractive business.

By the time the Select Committee on the Stannaries reported in 1887, this process was well underway. In the eastern part of the county tributing had to a large extent been done away with. (18) Even in a major western mine like Dolcoath, the number of tributers employed had considerably diminished, most of the ore-containing ground was being set at so much per ton raised, the manager describing this as a type of tutwork:

> "There are two classes: we call tutworkmen, those who are engaged in driving levels and sinking shafts, and we have what we call stopers who are stoping ground at 'per ton', we also call them tutworkmen." (19)

At neighbouring East Pool, the captain reported that there were at present no tributers employed, (20) and a miner declared that tribute was "going less" all the time. (21)

The manager at Dolcoath, however, emphatically rejected the suggestion that tributers could be done away with altogether. He pointed out that they undertook to work in parts of the mine, into which the adventurers did not think it worthwhile to send paid labour, and that not infrequently they thus uncovered worthwhile deposits of ore which would not otherwise have been discovered. (22) In other words, by this time tributers were undertaking the the vital work of exploration under a method of payment, which meant that the adventurers had only to pay for success. In the majority of mines he had become one of a dwindling minority of underground labourers, who could afford to risk the possibility of little return for their labour. As a witness put

it "as a tributer he is supposed to have a little means by him, or else he ought not to venture." (23)

There is insufficient evidence to estimate with any degree of precision the rate at which tutwork was giving way to time-wage labour in dead ground. It has already been noted (above p.[68]) that in 1842 in some mines all labour was performed on the owners' account. There is no real evidence to suggest that such labour formed anything more than a marginal section of the underground labour force in the first half of the nineteenth century. G.R. Lewis whose study was published in 1908, took a retrospective view of the industry, and remarked:

> "It should be added in closing, that both the tutwork and tribute systems, particularly the latter, are, and have been for perhaps a century, giving way to the ordinary wage system common elsewhere. The details of this movement we need not stop to analysise. Suffice it to say that its mainspring is probably to be found in the increase of engineering skill and geographical knowledge among the mine captains and agents of mining companies, which tends to increase their caution in the allotment of work to tributers and lessens the latter's chance of making lucky strikes. This fact has brought into unpleasant relief the casual and fluctuating nature of the tributer's compensation and the fact that he may be forced to work for weeks and sometimes months without pay and dependent for support upon the advances of his employers. All these considerations have brought about a steady drift on the part of ore excavators from the tribute to the tut form of payment, and on the part of the original tutworkers, in an even more strongly marked degree, to ordinary piece of time work." (24)

A writer in 1888 has no description of time wages replacing tutwork, but emphasises the extent to which tut-bargains were replacing tribute bargains. (25)

To summarise: it can be asserted that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, modification of the traditional methods of wage payment intensified. There is little evidence to suggest that this modification had proceeded very far in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its progress only became evidently rapid in the final quarter of the century.

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The Length of the Working Day and the Rhythm of Labour

A capitalising industry faces the problem of obtaining a suitably adaptable industrial labour force. It is not simply a matter of securing a working force which can be accustomed to a new scene of labour; the factory for the home or workshop, or the deep and extensive underground mine for the shallower workings imposed by earlier technological limitations, or just of the acquisition of new skills to work with new equipment, but involves a complex transition to a new rhythm of work which demands a more disciplined use of labour time, and a closer task application.

Economic efficiency demands that where investment in fixed capital in the form of machinery is high, that the fullest possible use of labour be made, since the running costs of the machinery are fixed and continuous. The beam engines pumping the Cornish mines worked continuously. They had to since the water level had to be controlled, day and night, work day and holiday. Expensive coal was being thus consumed constantly. Since it was not in the nature of the task for which it was employed, that the engine could rest, in the interests of the most efficient use of factor resources, labour had to adapt itself to the demands of capital.

In adapting to these demands, labour had to accept three basic changes from its accustomed rhythm of work. Firstly it had to accept some form of shift system, so that the mine could be worked through the twenty four hours of the day. Secondly it had to work more regularly taking as few holidays as possible, and thirdly it had to become a more specialised labour force, dispensing with that degree of casualness which permitted a miner to go off and bring in the harvest, or help at the seasonal peaks of the pilchard fishing; otherwise there would be seasonal breaks when there could be too little labour to satisfy the demands of productive efficiency. All three of these basic shifts in notions of time and labour efficiency occurred in the Cornish mining industry.

The first problem is that of holidays and labour irregularity. Edward Thompson suggests:

> "In truth the deep rooted folk-memory of a golden age or of 'Merrie England', derives not from the notion that material goods were more plentiful in 1780, than in 1840, but from nostalgia for the pattern of work and leisure which obtained before the outer and inner discipline of industrialism settled upon the working man." (1)

In the days before the industrial revolution, the tinners certainly showed a marked leisure-preference, and his calendar allowed him plentiful opportunities to indulge it. Carew in 1603 described the tinners as following a calendar which, "alloweth them more holidays than are warranted by the church, our laws, or their own profit." (2) Carew believed this was to some extent justified by the arduous nature of their work, but Thomas Tonkin, commenting in the early eighteenth century on Carew's remarks, was prepared to allow no such justification:

> "Their toil is so far from being so extreme as Mr. Carew represents it, that few labourers, I believe, work so little; except when they draw water, for which there are so many new engines now invented that this labour is in a good measure taken off. For what between their numerous holidays, holiday eves, feasts, account days (once a month) YeuWhiddins or one way or another they invent to loiter away their time, they do not work one half of their month for the owners and employers. Several gentlemen have endeavoured to break through their custom , but it has been hitherto to little purpose." (3)

Borlase in 1758, mentions the tinners holding "some holidays peculiar to themselves", specifying Jeu-Whydn (White Thursday) the Thursday one clear week before Christmas Day, celebrated as the anniversary of the discovery of the technique of tin smelting, and St. Piran's Day on the 5th March. St. Piran was the patron saint of the miners. (4) There were other feasts kept by miners in some parts of the county. 24th January was known as St. Paul's Pitcher Day and kept by the tin streamers of East Cornwall:

> "On the day before the Feast of St. Paul, a water pitcher is set up at a convenient distance, and pelted with stones until entirely demolished.

> The men then leave their work and adjourn to a neighbouring ale-house, where a new pitcher bought to replace the old one, is successively filled and emptied, and the evening is given up to merriment and misrule. —— It is the occasion of a revel, in which, as an old streamer observes, there is open rebellion against the water drinking rule, which is enforced upon them whilst at work." (5)

The tin streamers did not observe St. Piran's Day, but observed instead Picrous Day on the second Thursday before Christmas. (6) Neither of the two feasts were associated with any particular custom, but were characterised by heavy drinking, "As drunk as a Perraner" being a simile still used in some parts of the county. St. Piran (or Perran) was himself believed to have died of drink.

The first Friday in March was known as Friday in Lide, and was observed by the tinners in some parts of the county. The custom associated with it, is in itself commentary on early work rhythms:

> "This day is marked by a serio-comic custom of sending a young lad on the highest mound or hillock of the work, and allowing him to sleep there as long as he can; the length of his siesta being the measure of the afternoon nap for the tinners throughout the ensuing twelve-months." (7)

The old miners also observed Midsummer Day as a holiday. In addition to these special holidays, the normal British holidays were kept, Good Friday, Christmas Day, and Whitsuntide, and on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the miners, we are told, refused to work for "superstitious reasons." (8) Besides the calendar of holidays, each parish had its own feast day, which although nominally on a Sunday, usually entailed the suspension of business for the Monday and Tuesday following. (9) The Account days when the pitches were set provided monthly holidays.

In the previous chapter, it was indicated that the methods of wage payment adopted in the mines were to some extent designed to ensure the constant attendance of the labourer at his work, by giving him a direct stake in increased productivity. But this was not a sufficient safeguard from the point of view of industrial efficiency. Max Weber has pointed out that the

institution of piece rates can have the effect of less rather than more work being accomplished in the same time, because the worker reacts to an increase in piece rate by decreasing his output, since the opportunity of earning more is less attractive than that of working less:

> "He did not ask: how much can I earn in a day if I do as much work as possible? but: how much must I work in order to earn the wage which I earned before and which takes care of my traditional needs? ... A man does not by nature wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose." (10)

It was perhaps this characteristic of traditional labour attitudes which lay behind the situation which William Jenkin described at Redruth in 1793:

> "The Common tinners continue to be very refractory, and insolent: many of them refuse to work, and have not gone underground for three weeks past —— They have no just cause for it; for their wages have been rather too high lately than otherwise; the consequence has been too much brandy drinking, and other bad practices." (11)

The miners could in fact have been exercising a leisure preference, with previously earned high wages ensuring their subsistence they were preferring the company and entertainment of the ale-house to the underground labour of the mine.

The problem of absenteeism, that is the staying away from work on occasions other than holidays, was largely concentrated on the miners' practice of keeping "Bad Monday", or "Mazed Monday". Akin to the keeping of Saint Monday in certain English trades, this was the practice of staying away from work on the Monday following pay day, the weekend having been spent in the ale-house. Jenkin described this practice in 1800:

> "... those who are paid on the Saturdays —— not having sufficient time for making up their accounts and dividing their money on that day —— frequently meet together for that purpose the next morning —— and as seldom anything of that kind is done amongst the miners without the bottle, the Sunday, (with many of them) is a day of disorder and drunkeness. And even the Monday is frequently a broken day in consequence thereof." (12)

According to a write in 1838, e en when pay day was on a Friday, the Monday was still ne rth less lo t to labour:

> It was infrequently happens that bodies of miners when the pay day is on a Friday, never leave the public house till th following Monday." (13)

The eighteenth century miner enjoyed welcome seasonal breaks in the routine of mining life, by assisting in the pilchard fishery at its autumn peak. Pryce d scribes this practice in 1778:

> "Our county being altogether maritime, and the miners being situated in the most narrow part of it ... many of our adroit tinners are equally conversant with naval and subterranean affairs. So true is this, that in St. Ives and Levant during the fishing season, they are wholly employed upon the water, to the great hinderance of the adjacent mines; and when the fishing craft is laid up against the next season, the fishermen again become tinners, and dive for employment into the depths of the earth."* (14)

Although Tonkin speaks of some of the gentry trying to break down some of the old customary holidays, it w uld be far from the truth to imagine that the old pattern of work and leisure was indulged at the expense and against the wishes of the gentry and employers of the mining districts. Indeed, it was the eighteenth century practice for employers to subsidise some of the holidays of the miners. In 1758, Borlase states that the miners, in "all the considerable mines" were allowed money to "make merry withal" in honour of St. Piran. (15) The Dolcoath mining accounts for 1756-6 contain the entry, "to Midsummer to three men 3s." (16) On Picrous Day it was the custom for the owner of a tin stream to contribute a shilling a man towards the merry making. (17) This subsidisation of holidays was still in existence in the 1780's, for a visitor in that year remarked on the frequency of miners' holidays and commented:

> "At some of which times, they are furnished with money by their empl yers."** (18)

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*For a fuller discussion of mixed employment see below pp. 95 - 100

**C.f. Cost Book of Great Work Mine 1759-62 which indicates that the allowance for the men at Terrantide was 6d. and for the Captains 1/-. (A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, The Cornish Miner (1927))p. 129

Although a visitor in 1791 still commented that the miners had many holidays in the year, (19) it is clear that by the turn of the century the qualified tolerance of the higher ranks of society, was coming to an end. William Jenkin in 1805, is expressing not even a qualified approval:

> "This has been a broken time with the labourers —— so many Holy-days (as people call them but in fact they are idle, feasting days) have occasioned a great loss to every mine. At Tin Croft the Captain told me yesterday, that every such day was a loss of £100 to the Adventurers in that mine." (20)

Three years previously he had estimated that since the miners worked about six hours in twenty-four, if one deducted there from, "the paydays, taking days and those called Holydays", then one could safely affirm that the tinners were not underground on average more than twenty-six hours a week throughout the year. (21) In 1808, the Rev. Richard Warner found that the holidays were in the process of disappearing:

> "the riotous revelling held on particular days, when the gains of labour were always dissipated in the most brutal debauchery, are now of very rare occurrence, and will probably in the course of a few years, be only remembered in tradition." (22)

A writer nine years later also noticed the changing state of affairs:

> "Desperate wrestling matches, inhuman cock fights, pitched battles and riotous revellings, are happily now of much rarer occurrence than heretofore; the spirit of sport has evaporated, and that of industry has supplied its place. The occupations in the mining countries fill up the time of those engaged in them too effectively to allow leisure for prolonged revels, or frequent festivities, in the other parts of Cornwall, the constant pursuits of steady labour have nearly banished the traditional seasons of vulgar riot and dissipation." (23)

In 1824 it was said of the tinners' holidays, that they were regarded with less veneration than formerly, "many of the tinners knowing little about them and caring less."*(24)

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*A writer in 1874 states that St. Piran's day was observed, "until within the last few years." (Mrs. H.P. Whitcombe, Bygone Days in Devonshire and Cornwall)(1874) p. 188

The process of erosion was a gradual one. The evidence collected by Dr. Barham for the 1842 Report on child labour, makes it clear that by that date the erosion process was substantially complete. The report concluded that, as a general rule, "no holidays are allowed in the mines of this district, except Christmas Day and Good Friday." (25) The only major exception to this was the very old Levant Mine at St. Just, where six days holiday a year were still allowed, the captain describing it as "an old established custom in the mine." (26) Levant was a very hot and difficult mine in which to work.

In general by this time, only Christmas Day and Good Friday survived as clear holidays. Although the Parish Feast survived as an institution, it did not generally entail a complete labour stoppage: "the attendance at this is so contrived as not to occasion any loss of time at the mine." (27) There were a few exceptions. The United Tin Mines allowed St. Austell Feast as a holiday, (28) and at Wheal Vor the agent remarked that the young surface workers were allowed to observe the parish feast at the expense of the day's wages. He seemed somewhat surprised at the leisure preference which they expres ed, by rather losing their wages than missing the feast if they were allowed to go. (29) There may be some significance in the fact that both United Mines, St. Austell and Wheal Vor were chiefly tin mines, as was the Levant mine where six days holiday were still allowed. Tin mining was a much older industry than copper mining, and traditionalism may have been accordingly stronger, and by 1842 the major tin mines were working very deep lodes, in many cases beneath the copper lodes, and were consequently hot and difficult to work in. A greater degree of tolerance may have been shown to the labour force in these conditions.

By contrast the agent at Trevascus copper mine in the central mining district reported: that Christmas Day and Good Friday were the only holidays but, "there used to be many in the year; the practice of keeping their own feasts is declining." (30) The erosion was clearly gradual. In the

Consolid t d Min s at Gwenna , a l ge and import t con , vestigages of the old holiday patt rn still surviv d. In 1842 a girl surface worker there t ld Dr. Barham that they we e permitt d half a day at Whitsuntide, two hours at Midsummer and on Christmas Fve, in addition to Christmas Day and Good Friday. (31) Whitsun Monday was probably one of the longest surviving of the old holidays. The agent of Carnon Mine told Dr. Barham, that although Christmas Day and Good Friday were the only acknowledged holidays, "Whitsun Monday is generally v ry nearly a holiday."* (32)

The managers and agents were making determined attempts to deal with th practice of "Bad Monday." At seve al of the major mines discharge was stat d to be the automatic conse u nce of persist nt Monday absenteeism. The agent at Dolcoath reported, "no drinking bouts after payday, or discharge would follow if t ey failed to attend on the Monday." (33) At North Roskear the policy was the same:

> "We have no drinking bouts after payday; all come to work on the Monday as usual; if they did not they would s on be discharged. We never allow a man to leave his place without leave; if he wants a day he is to ask his captain and there is generally no objection." (34)

At Wheal Vo , the agent found the practice still general when he went there in 1840, but set himself to remedy this state of affairs:

> "... the men were in the habit of spending the Monday f llowing payday, and sometimes a day or two be ides in drunken rioting, so that it went by the name of 'Bad M nday.' He told them that if they did not keep to their work, he should send them about their business and get those who would. This kept them pretty steady; but a short time since, on his being called to some distance, they took advantage of his absense and returned to their old practices; when he discovered

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*The employers victory although substantial, was not totally complete. In 1842 there was a strike of miners at Consolidated Mines, after miners who had absented themselves on Easter Monday, were fined. (West Briton 1st April, 1842). As late as 1872 a strike broke out at Wheal Basset when men were similarly fined for absenteeism on New Year's Day. The local paper in reporting the incident, described taking a holiday on New Year's Day as "common in our mining districts." (Cornwall Gazette 6th Jan. 1872).

> this he fined them a guinea a man. These measures seem nearly to have put a stop to the custom."* (35)

During the course of roughly half a century, the traditional holidays of the miner, still general up to 1800, were almost entirely eroded. The attempt to regularise the working day began much earlier.

The reading public were frequently misinformed by eighteenth century writers on the amount of time which the Cornish miner spent underground. According to one such writer in 1776, they spent all their time underground:

> "the common people here are a very strange kind of being, half savages at the best. Many thousands of them live entirely underground, where they burrow and breed like rabbits." (36)

Southey was equally guilty of spreading such a misconception as late as 1802:

> "Nothing can be more desolate than the appearance of this province, where most of the inhabitants live in the mines. 'I never see the greater part of my parishioners,' said a clergyman here, 'till they come up to be buried!" (37)

Others whilst not going so far as to believe that the miners spent all their time underground, thought that at best they saw precious little daylight. Burke referred in 1756, to "unhappy wretches," who scarcely ever saw the light of the sun. (38) William Beckford in 1787, referred to the "few hours allotted them above ground," where they drunk an oblivion of their "subterranean existence." (39)

Cornish writers on the spot had distinctly different views on this matter. We have already seen what Thomas Tonkin (p. 73) and William Jenkin (above p. 77) had to say on this matter. Christopher Wallis, a Helston Lawyer, spoke in a similar vein. In his diary for 3rd October, 1795 he entered:

> "The miners are uncommonly idle, for instance a week consists of 168 hours, it may be justly and fairly said that a tinner does not work 20 hours of these 168." (40)

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*The question of "Mazed Monday" was far from settled at this date, however, the keeping of this day figured largely in the arguments over the five-week month in 1872. (See Cornwall Gazette 10th Feb. 1872, and 2nd March 1872).

The truth lay between the two extremes, but nearer to the Cornish view. Carew is the authority for hours of work at the turn of the sixteenth century. He states that in 1603 the tinners worked for only four hours a day, the task being too arduous for longer shifts. (41) By the mid-eighteenth century, it is clear that the norm had become a six or eight hour day. Shift working had already been introduced. Celia Fiennes in 1695 reported seeing a great many people at work "almost night and day," but it is not clear whether she was referring to the labour force in general, or just to those whose labour was necessary to keep the water level down, probably the latter. (42) Dr. Pococke in 1750 provides the earliest account of a complete twenty-four hour shift system in operation:

> "A succession of men are always in the mine, except on Sundays.* They work eight hours, from six to two and from two to ten, and from ten to six, and are out of the mine sixteen hours." (43)

It would seem that by 1750, the eight hour shift system was in existence but was probably not as yet general. Pryce (1778) refers to cores of from six to eight hours relieving in place. (44) From the early days of the industry's capitalisation, the miners had worked the shift system. There is no discoverable opposition to shift working, for although it has its inconveniences, the miners, many of whom were small holders, probably liked a system which gave them the daylight hours for their gardens at regular intervals. The shifts were regularly rotated among the men, a weekly exchange in turns of work being the usual arrangement. (45)

The lateness of the erosion of the traditional holidays, in an industry which may be regarded as having "taken off" by 1750, was probably a matter of

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*Except for a small force to look after the pumps, Sunday labour remained unacceptable to the Cornish miners, many of whom were staunch Methodists. When in 1867 the agent at Condurrow Mine near Camborne ordered the labour force to attend on a Sunday, a general excitement prevailed in the town, several thousand people visited the mine on the Sunday in question, and the West Briton thought that the agent must have given the order in "a temporary fit of insanity." (West Briton 3rd April, 1967, "A Hundred Years ago.)"

priorities. It made sense in terms of practical management to concentrate on the working day itself, both on its length and on the degree of diligence which the labourers might be expected to exercise during its course.

The four hour shift which Carew describes was clearly of little use in the age of machine pumping when fixed costs were being incurred throughout the twenty-four hour day. To make effective use of four hour shifts in this context, a labour force twice as large as that required by an eight hour shift system would be demanded. Pryce records that in the early eighteenth century, a 12 hour shift was tried but by 1778 had been generally abolished, having been found to lead to a lack of application on the part of the miners. He says that it was becoming the norm for the men to work either six or eight hours, depending on the difficulty of the particular task. (For example the further from ventilation a miner worked, the less able would he be to work eight instead of six hours). The difficulties of supervision had led to a lot of time wasting on the twelve hour cores:

> "... they were nothing but an excuse for idleness; twelve hours being too many for a man to work underground without intermission. Accordingly when a pair of men went underground formerly, they made it a rule, to sleep out a candle, before they set about their work; that is, if their place of work was dry, they would lay themselves down and sleep, as long as a whole candle would continue burning; then rise up and work for two or three hours pretty briskly; after that, have a touch pipe, that is rest themselves half an hour to smoke a pipe of tobacco; and so play and sleep away half their working time: but Mining being more expensive than it formerly was, those idle customs are superseded by more labour and industry." (46)

Pryce also describes the shift system as normal:

> "After this manner they work out their core until fresh men come underground and relieve them in place." (47)

It was normally only the tutworkers who worked on a strict shift system. Tributers were allowed much more latitude, and worked most often in small pares which could not be divided into relieving groups. Tutworkers were the

miners who did all the preparatory work of driving levels and sinking shafts. They had first to open up the mine before the tributers could come in and excavate the ore. The rate of progress in the preliminary stages of mining was so slow, that unless tutworkers laboured regularly, it would be a long time before the mine was opened up sufficiently to allow adequate exploitation of the mineral wealth. A writer in 1843, claimed that two or three feet was often the whole amount of the united operations of twenty or thirty men for a whole week. (48)

With expensive machinery running throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, and with the progress of the vital preliminary work so slow, it was not surprising that productive efficiency should dictate a shift system, and further that wherever possible, eight hours should be worked, since this afforded a considerable saving in the size of the labour force required. There were however mines in which the physical conditions still dictated that in the hardest parts of the mine six hour shifts were the limit of the miners' capacity for labour. What was important, was that the tutworkmen should keep good time once mining became so expensive. In 1824 it was said to be the function of the captain to see:

> "that every man fills his appointed place and time. On a superficial survey this inspection and the fines that are levied on defaulters, may seem unjustifiably severe; especially as the men who neglect their labour cease to earn wages while they are idle. But it must be recollected, that the regular expense of the mine in engines, coals, and other concomitant disbursements, will admit of no suspension. And consequently; if the idle were to be encouraged, general confusion would ensue, and in proportion to their neglect of labour, the best mine in the county must inevitably sink." (49)

The normal fine for lateness or leaving work early was half a crown. It was difficult for the tutworkmen, few of whom had watches, to judge the time to come up when they had been working underground beyond the range of the bell which signalled the end of a shift. The evidence of a miner in 1864 emphasises this problem:

"Q. - You come up whenever you like, do you not?

A. - We are not allowed to come up before two o'clock, that is a custom, if we do we get fined." (50)

He went on to add that miners often unintentionally left work early, and then had to hide in holes out of the agent's sight. Time was usually reckoned by the underground labourers in terms of candles, (Pryce's use of the term "to sleep a candle" has been noted above p. 82) and although as a rough guide the method probably worked, its standard of exactitude left much to be desired. A mine captain offered the opinion in 1864 that the men could tell "very nearly" by the candles. He added that some carried down watches but these were in the minority. The quality of the candles varied. A miner asked if they were not sufficient time keepers once experience was adequate, replied that some candles were not so good as others.

The miner leaving work in the lower levels, and finding that he had misjudged the time, would wait on the ladders, or hide in the upper levels to avoid being discovered by the agent before the bell sounded:

> "They bore so much ground and perhaps sometimes it is done more quickly at one time than at another. While in a state of perspiration they get in a draughty place, and stop there till the bell rings in order to avoid any collision with the agent." (51)

The health risk to miners coming from heavy labour in high temperatures and standing in draughty places is obvious. The quotation also suggests that the miners estimated time by having a knowledge of the time it usually took them to complete a certain measure of work, as well as judging by candles.

The shift system had its side effects in the life of the mining community. A writer in the 1840's commented on the disrupting influence it could have on household management:

> "The trade of a miner is in every way unfavourable to regularity. The miner neither eats, drinks, sleeps, or goes to church with his family, insomuch that the wife finds it as hard to regulate the disposition of time as of money. Often times when she has set in for a job, she is suddenly interrupted. Grace for

> instance was in the midst of whitewashing her walls today, when word is brought that Tom has changed core and she must instantly 'fit dinner for him.' Away go the tubs and lime brushes higgledy piggledy, and the bellows are plied to set up a fire for the potatoes, the stew or the fish." (52)

A school master reported in 1842 that those of his pupils who were boys working underground, could only attend his school on alternate weeks (53) and Billy Bray, the famour local preacher, described how the shift system affected his chapel building:

> "Sometimes I was forenoon core, and when I had taken my dinner I would go to the chapel and work as long as I could see, and the next day do the same. The next week I should be afternoon core, then I should go up to the chapel in the morning and work until the middle of the day, and then go home and away to the mine. The week following I should be night core, I should then work about the chapel by day, and go to the mine by night." (54)

Where three eight hour cores were worked, the change over usually took place at, 6 a.m., 2 p.m., and 10 p.m. (55) In 1842 in some mines only two shifts were worked, the one beginning at ten being omitted, but the evidence from the individual mines indicates that this was not a very common practice. (56)

A question of crucial importance to any evaluation of the length of the working day, is whether or not the pares relieved each other "in place" or at "grass." Lifting machinery was very late in being introduced into the mines, and the miner had to climb to and from his place of work by means of ladders. In deep mines, indeed in most mines from the mid-eighteenth century, the climbing of these ladders added considerably to the miner's labour. A miner estimated in 1864, that it would take about an hour and a half to climb 205 fathoms, and further that a climb of an hour and a half was more exhausting than the same amount of time at work. Another miner thought that such a climb would be equal to a quarter of a days labour (57) and a third that there were mines in which no less than three hours daily were expended by miners in going to and returning from their place of work. (58)

Barham's report drew attention to this important matter:

> "The time during which the miners remain underground is materially affected by the manner in which the relays relieve each other. If they relieve at the place of work, as is usually the case in the more considerable mines, the eight hour term of labour is in fact raised to nine or ten ... Where parties relieve each other after six hours it is always done in place, so that the work is uninterruptedly continued. The older miners generally state that the practice of relieving "in place" in the case of the eight hour course is an innovation, the practice in their younger days, being to relieve at the surface, one party going down, when the other came up." (59)

This is a difficult problem to resolve. Pryce (1778) seems to be describing it as the norm for shift changes to occur "in place;"

> "After this manner they work out their core till fresh men come underground and relieve them in place." (60)

But it would seem from a letter written in 1795, that this matter along with the question of the six or eight hour day was at that date still a matter of dispute between the management and the men:

> "A bad custom has prevailed lately in our mines in general, which is that the men work only 6 hours whereas they used to work 8 hours, and they expect to get more than they used to when they worked longer.
>
> We took up the subject very seriously this day week at Prince George Acent. where we found the last two months cost to exceed £1,300. And we entered into a resolution to insist on the men working 8 hours in future, instead of 6 and relieve in place. —— and sent our resolution book to Herland the next day, where it was at last unanimously agreed to adopt our resolutions." (61)

The resolution cannot however, have been completely successful, for seven years later Jenkin was writing that the time generally allotted for underground labour was six hours a day. (62)

Although the six hour core was still in existence in 1842, the evidence suggests that it was rarer than hitherto. It was in the larger tin mines, where as we have seen the old pattern of holidays lasted longest, that the six hour was most resiliant. At Carnon four six hour shifts were worked, as

was the case at Wheal Vor and at Levant. The Captain of the last mentioned that the mine was hot and deep and it was considered that "6 hours will work a man down." (63) Three persons gave evidence in 1842 that up to thirty or so years previously the six hour shift had been much more general. (64) A fourth witness, aged 55, thought that there had been three eight hour cores a day when he was a boy, just as now, but added that since it was then the practice for shifts to relieve at the surface instead of in place as was now the case, the hours were not really so long as they now were. (65)

It would appear that the eight hour shift was growing in prominence over the first half of the nineteenth century, just as by the eighteenth century the four hour shift of Carew's day had disappeared.

A greater degree of discretion over time keeping was sometimes allowed to the tributers, it being supposed that their own self-interest in being so directly remunerated in relation to the value of their product, was sufficient inducement to constant application. In general they did not work any shorter hours than the tutworkers, nor was daily attendance at the mine any less required of them. Pryce writes that the tributer was required to work his pitch "at all working times, in a regular manner with a certain number of men." (66) It could be the case that tributers on average worked longer hours. The agent at Consolidated Mines in Gwennap, stated that tributers went down about eight in the morning, and came up about six in the evening. It took them about forty minutes to reach their places, and about eighty to come up, so that they were actually at work for eight hours. The tutworkers at the mine were working eight hour shifts relieving at the surface, so that they were at work about six to seven hours. (67)

Tributers were more likely to work voluntary overtime than were the tutworkmen. Of the latter it was said that they very rarely worked more than their eight hours. (68) Tributers on the other hand, had frequently an incentive to work extra hours when their contract was working out in their favour, and they knew that their time to benefit was limited since the

tribute rate would be adjusted at the next survey. (69)

In 1840 there was an incident at Polberrow Consols which illustrates the point that the tributers no less than the tutworkers were required to work when the management required them to. It further illustrates that the concession of shorter hours to miners working in hard ground was being less frequently granted as the nineteenth century progressed. There was a strike. The dispute was between the tributers and the managers. The management wanted the men to work on Saturdays, to which they objected, alleging that from the nature of the ground, five days a week was as much as could be expected of them. The management opposed this on the grounds that:

> "... though the men were only paid for the work they actually did, yet the water charge, and many other expenses, were the same as if six days work were done, and thus to a certain extent, 52 days in the year were thrown away."

The local paper in reporting the incident, placed itself firmly on the side of the management:

> "We are always disposed to advocate the reasonable claims of the working classes; but our miners should remember that these are not the times to embarrass and perplex adventurers by adhering to any practice which tends to an unnecessary increase of costs."

The result of the dispute is not reported in the press, it is recorded that the men had offered to work until 12 o'clock on Saturdays. (70)

Whatever the variations from mine to mine, it is clear that, except in the case of voluntary overtime, the Cornish miner, whether tributer or tutworker, did not normally work more than eight hours a day, although when time consumed in ascending and descending the shafts is included, this was probably nearer ten hours. The working hours of the miner, compared very favourably with those of agricultural labourers in the same vicinity. A fact which did not go unnoticed by the country gentry, who were ever ready to attribute delinquency in the mining villages to the greater leisure time which the miner enjoyed. A witness from Redruth in 1842, thought that the

rowdyness of mining villages was largely attributable to:

> "... the long interval (16 hrs) between their turns of work. This accounts for the crowds of idle youths, you may at any time, see about our roads, in blacksmiths' shops and such like resorts; this will also account for the consequences of idleness." (71)

A second witness put the matter very simply:

> "Those employed in the mines are not so orderly as those employed in other branches of labour. The former have more time on their hands than the latter." (72)

It was not just with the agricultural workers of the vicinity that the hours of the Cornish mine labourer were contrasted. They were also compared with those of the colliers in the Northern coalfields. The Northern Star pointed out in 1844:

> "Sir Robert Peel characterises this demand (the eight hour day) of the Miners of the North as 'mischievous', and 'one which if carried out would be productive of the most injurious results', appearing to be in a state of the most blissful ignorance of the fact that the miners of the South work no more than that term of hours daily. YET SUCH IS THE FACT. The lead and copper miners of Cornwall work only eight hours daily; and though they have the option of working longer if they please, they do not do so, but rigidly confine themselves to that term." (73)

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THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF LIFE

Wage Levels

The systems of payment employed in the Cornish mines make it impossible to provide any precise measurement of the movement of money wages. The best that can be done in this direction is to examine the averages given by contemporary writers and see to what extent they are mutually consistent. The use of averages in an industry where in one month one labourer might earn £20 and another in the same mine twenty shillings, can only be approximate. They will nevertheless give some indication of the broad movement of monetary wages through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A pamphlet written in 1697 states that the average wage of the miner was £5 0s. 10d. a year, and that many men worked day and night in order to bring their earnings up to fourteen or fifteen shillings a month. (1) The closing years of the seventeenth century were distressed ones for the mining industry, and by 1730 good workmen were said to be earning from twenty to twenty-seven shillings a month. (2) Pryce in 1778 thought that a fortunate tributer could expect to clear thirty shillings a month. (3) Tributers received generally higher wages than tutworkmen.

The last years of the eighteenth century saw a significant rise in wages. Eden stated in 1797, that the wages of a Gwennap miner were by that time about £2 a month. (4) Most of this increase had taken place in the 1790's. A witness submitting evidence to a select committee in 1799, stated that in the last decade wages had increased from a range of £1 10s. to £2 2s. in 1791, to £2 5s. to £3 3s. in 1798. (5) Since the purpose of the committee was to enquire into the high prices which Birmingham manufacturers were having to pay for copper, this Cornish witness probably tended to exaggerate increasing wage costs, but even if we take his lower figures as being nearer to the mark i.e. wages increased from £1 10s. in 1791 to £2 2s. in 1798, there is substantial agreement with the figure of Pryce of £1 10s. for 1778 and with Eden's figure of £2 for 1797. That the figures for 1791 and 1778 should hardly differ, is to be expected, since the intervening period was the one

of fierce competition with Angelsey, with low copper prices causing mine closures and unemployment. By 1790 Angelsey had disappeared as a serious competitor in the copper market, and prosperity returned to the Cornish mines. In 1791 persons attempting to recruit Cornish miners to work in mines in Somerset were told that there was little prospect of young miners leaving their homes since the "spirit of mining" was high. (6)

The upward trend continued through the first half of the nineteenth century, but at a slower rate. Sir William Lemon's table of 1837 gives the following wages:

Rates of Wages per Month 1837

	West of Penzance	Midland District	St. Austell District	Average
Tributers	47s. 6d.	68s. 0d.	59s.	58s. 2d.
Tutworkmen	45s. 0d.	57s. 2d.	59s.	53s. 8d.
Day Labourers	42s. 0d.	41s. 0d.	45s.	42s. 8d.

Since the day labourers were almost all surface workers the overall average for underground labour in the county was £2 15s. 11d. (7)

A table compiled in 1841, gives a slightly higher average:

Estimated Rate of Wages per Month

	Eastern District	Midland District	Western District
Tributers	£3 11s. 7d.	£2 15s. 0d. — £3 2s.	£3
Tutworkmen	£3 1s. 11d.	£2 12s. 6d. — £3 0s.	£2 10s.

This gives an overall average for the county, if the high and low wages of the midland district are first averaged, of a few pence under £3. (8) The average had risen since 1837 because of an increase in the demand for labour from the growing mining regions of the east. By 1849, wages were said to have been in the Redruth district (midland) between £2 10s. and £2 15s. a month, and to have been at that level, "for some time past." Wages in the eastern district were at that time said to be about ten shillings a month higher. (9)

The estimates of these middle years of the century, would appear to be to a large degree mutually consistent. By 1864 the general level of miners wages in the county, was said to be from £3 to £3 10s. a month. (10) Wages would then appear to have at least doubled since Pryce suggested thirty shillings a month in 1778, with the most abrupt rise coming in the 1790's.

How do the wages earned by the Cornish miners compare with those earned by other British miners over the same period?

Eden wrote that the miners of Gwennap were, "better paid than most labourers in England" (11), but he could not have had a specific comparison with other miners in mind, for the evidence which he provides elsewhere suggests that Cornish wages were inferior to those earned by most coal miners, and by no means better than those earned by other metal miners.

Durham colliers were said in 1765 to be earning twelve to fourteen shillings a week, a Wigan collier at the same period about 10s. 10d. a week, whil t the average wage in the Derbyshire coalfield was between 1764 and 1776, 1s. 6d. a day. (12) Coal miners would seem to have earned more than the 30s. a month which Pryce thought the lucky Cornish tributer could earn in 1778. When comparison is made with the 40s. a month which Eden estimated in 1797, then the result is even more unfavourable to the Cornish miner. Colliery as well as tin and copper mining wages increased in the last decade of the century. In Newcastle this increase was in the region of 33% (13 , and day workers in Ebbw Vale in 1796 could earn up to 2s. 6d. a day, and piece rates were probably higher. (14)

Cornish wages compare rather more favourably with those earned by other metal miners. Eden says that a Cumberland metal miner could earn £26 a year (15) and a Durham lead miner £25 p.a., although lead miners in Denbighshire earned between two and three shillings a day.

Cornish wages do not seem to have made up any ground on those of coal miners in the first half of the nineteenth century. Weekly wages in Lancashire for colliers in 1839 were about twenty-five shillings, though they

dropped to about a pound in 1849. They were again at twenty-five shillings in 1859. In South Wales, wages in 1840 stood at twenty-one shillings a week, although they fell to 14s. 3d. in 1849. In Northumberland in 1843 colliers were earning between fifteen and twenty shillings a week. (All figures from A.L. Bowley, Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge 1900) pp. 108-9).

It would appear that in the period around the late 'thirties for which we have most comparative data, colliers' wages were significantly higher than those of Cornish miners, for whom we have figures of £2 15s. 11d. (1837) and a few pence under £3 (1841). The differences were quite large. The annual earnings of a Lancashire collier in 1839 would have been approximately £65; that of a South Wales collier in 1840, £54 12s., whilst that of a Cornish miner in 1841 was less than £36.*

Other Sources of Support

Particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Cornish miners frequently combined other activities with mining; both income earning activities, and those such as small-holding or minor fishing activities which produced food for the families own consumption. Harry Carter, the Prussia Cove smuggler, who was born in 1749, was the son of a miner who also rented a small farm at a rental of £12 per annum. (16) Samuel Drew's father, Drew was born in 1765, fluctuated between the employments of husbandman and tin streamer. (17) The father of John Harris (born 1820) was a full time tributer at a copper mine, but held a small farm of seven or eight acres on leasehold:

> "He followed his daily avocation underground, and performed his farm work in the evenings and mornings, and on holidays and leisurable opportunities." (18)

The problem of discussing mixed occupations is that a degree of precision

*Figures obtained by applying a multiplier to Bowley's weekly figures, and to the Cornish monthly figures. No allowance has been made for holidays, and constant employment is assumed.

has to be sought from evidence which is usually vague. The double occupational appellation "tinner-husbandman" occurs frequently in the marriage register of one eighteenth century parish, Gulval, and presumably refers to people like the fathers of Carter and Drew whose occupations were genuinely mixed, rather than to the nineteenth century miner who cultivated a patch of land "off core." To talk of a genuinely mixed economy, we really need to be sure that the individual is fairly equally dependent on two distinct occupations, or that he moves easily from one occupation to another as demand opportunities dictate.

There was a certain mixing of fishing and mining activities. Pryce (1778) claimed that the tinners of the St. Ives and Levant district were "wholly employed upon the water" during the pilchard season. (19) The Press Gang was reported to have difficulty in pressing Cornish fishermen, because as soon as the season was over they "turned tinners and went into the mines, where they were unassailable." (20) This inverts the true situation. The pilchard season was of short duration, and the men were miners who became temporary fishermen, rather than the other way around.

The demands of a heavily capitalising industry reduced the tolerance which could be extended to casual labour attitudes, but the relatively short working day of the Cornish miner, the large tracts of unused wasteland, and the fact that tributers frequently received a sizable sum once or twice in their lifetime, meant that many of the nineteenth century miners cultivated large allotments or even small holdings. Local landowners leased portions of the downs, commons, and wastes to miners, who enclosed areas of about three or six acres and erected cottages. This was usually a condition of the lease which was held on three lives. ents were usually low, but the addition of

an extra life to ext nd the period of occupancy could be expensive.*

Sir Francis Basset thought that in the few years before 1793, fifty such cottages had been built on his land. The quit rents were 2s. 6d. a year which he was inclined to think too high, although his father had reduced them from 3s. 4d. in 1762. His father had permitted between fifty and sixty-five acres to be thus enclosed on his manor of Nancekuke between 1756 and 1786. (21) Other landlords also made a practice of granting such leases. William Jenkin who acted as steward for one family of landowners, sent in 1799 a b tch of l as s to a niece who had just succeeded to her uncle's estates describing them thus:

> "Some of them are for new encl sures on Treloweth Common, which thy late Uncle was particularly fond of enc uraging and ordered me to fill up such lives as might happen to drop on those lately executed." (22)

Jenkin pointed out that a degree of tolerance needed to be shown in giving the labouring miners plenty of time to pay when their leases came up for renewal:

> "as a miner's gettings are precarious and uncertain —— som times high, and sometimes low —— they can only renew as fortune favours them." (23)

He was a staunch believer in the moral and economic benefits which would attend the granting of such smallholdings to working miners. He testified to this belief at some length in a letter which he wrote in 1802. He pointed out that there was a plentiful supply of wasteland available in the mining parishes and that the miners given their short working day, and plenty of spare time for its cultivation, time which they otherwise spent in ale-houses:

> "To guard against an evil of such extensive magnitude, I have often wished that the proprietors of wastelands would endeavour to direct and guide the industry of

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*It was said by a witness before a housing inquiry in 1881, that the average duration of three lives was from 30-40 years, "because the lives that are put up are frequently miners, and they are proverbially a short-lived class" (P.P. 1881 p. 261 Q. 8079). New lives were not always allowed. John Harris records in his Autobiography, that when his father died in 1848 as a result of a mine fall, his mother was refused a new lease. (Autobiography p. 10).

these people to such efforts as would soon lessen their evils, by alloting each of them 3 or 4 acres for the term of three lives of their own nomination under the small annual rent of about 2s. an acre. When ever this has been tried round this neighbourhood the happy effects have soon been perceived. In the course of a few years they have been able to rear up little cottage houses for their habitation, and instead of meeting them staggering from their former haunts, the Brandy Shops, as before, you may now see them busily employed in enclosing and cultivating their little fields, beginning with a small piece (say half an acre) tilled with potatoes. The following year that part is tilled with corn, and a second half acre planted with potatoes and so on. The chief manure they use is as follows. In summer they cut up a quantity of turves from the unenclosed part of the downs or common, which serves their families as fuel through the ensuing winter, and with its ashes they manure the ground in which they till their next crop of potatoes. So that in the course of 6 or 7 years, they feel themselves comfortable in their little homely cots, surrounded with 3 or 4 acres of tolerably good pasture land sufficient to maintain a cow, the milk of which together with the potatoes they grow, make a considerable part of the food of their families. How great must be the satisfaction of a humane, benevolent landlord in seeing so many little dwelling houses of green meadows arising year after year in dismal barren spots, where nothing grew before but useless heath or Cornish furze. Instead of being as before, idle, careless, indolent, envious, dissatisfied and disaffected, the fruits of their former depraved, hopeless and wretched condition, they become careful and thrifty both of their money and time and soon begin to imbibe fresh notions respecting themselves and others and are happily found to be better fathers, better husbands and more respectable members of the community than they had ever been before."* (24)

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*C.f. Arthur Young's strikingly similar description of the effects of small holding provision on the characters of Yorkshire colliers:

> "now there is not a collier without his farm; each from three or four to 20 acres of land. Most of them keep a cow or two, and a galloway: raise the corn etc., they eat; are well fed, well cloathed industrious and happy. Their time is spent at home instead of the alehouse; those young fellows, who formerly were rioteus and debauched, now marry, settle and become the honest and valuable race of children."

(A Six Months Tour through the North of England (1771 ed.) ii. p. 263

The granting of these small acreages continued into the middle of the nineteenth century. A landowner giving evidence in 1842, said that he made a practice of granting leases on three lives to miners on two to three acres of coarse ground, on which they were to build a house of "a certain description." The yearly rent was 5s. an acre, and the cost of setting up a new life was £30. He said that other landlords did the same thing, but pointed out that it was only possible to do this for the miners who lived in villages not for the miners who lived in towns. (25)

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the increase in population must have restricted the opportunities available to the miners to rent such small-holdings. Barham stated that by 1842 in the older districts where large mines had long been worked, towns and villages had grown up diminishing the wastes and the greater number of miners were unprovided even with gardens. (26) A witness in 1864 remarked that although many of the miners in the west had gardens, in the neighbourhood of the towns and villages, the rent of land was so high as to preclude the possibility of this addition to comfort. (27) It was estimated in 1841 that about one fourth of the miners inhabited cottages built on such allotments. The rest rented cottages chiefly from speculative landlords, often neighbouring tradesmen and builders. (28) There was no significant provision of workers' housing by the mining companies. The tied house common in some of the coal mining districts was virtually unknown in the county. Some of these rented properties possessed gardens, but many of them were built in terrace form which offered less scope for the large gardens which could surround isolated cottages. (29)

Barham uses the term "collateral aid" to describe these part-time activities of the miner. (30) This is a useful term, since it correctly conveys the impression of a distinctly secondary employment. Barham reckoned that attempts to combine a farm of more than a few acres with regular mining employment were rarely successful. (31) The manager of Dolcoath told him that he preferred employing men with small plots to those with large ones, since

the latter could not be depended on to give so fully of their attention to mining. (32)

Barham reported that it was in the western districts that the different collateral aids were most concentrated. Here there seem to have been instances of joint ownership. Cows were sometimes kept co-jointly by several miners where their individual holdings were small. On the same principle, ten or so individuals sometimes shared a fishing boat. (33) The Wesleyan Minister at St. Just thought that perhaps one in ten of the heads of families there in 1842 had shares in small fishing boats, the purpose being to secure fish for the family's consumption. The minister did not think that these small boats were of any important pecuniary advantage to the miner. (34)

Pig keeping was a favourite spare time activity. Many of the cottages had pig styes attached, which though they made a useful contribution to the larder, had an adverse effect on the sanitary condition in which the mining family lived. (35)

A significant number of the miners possessed means by which their earnings were supplemented, but this was far from being generally the case. Few miners would seem to have pursued genuinely mixed occupations after the mid-eighteenth century. To many miners the mine was the only means of support; to the others it still meant the difference between tolerable comfort and dire distress.

Family Income

The earnings of the father were augmented by the addition of the earnings of other members of the family. Just how important the family income was to the mining household, can be seen from the following specimen budget from the evidence of the 1842 Report on child labour:

Miner aged 47, wife 45, married 26 years, 12 children - 4 dead, 1 married. Highest wages have been 55s. per month. Whole gettings of family are now:

Constance	-	21	earns	15s.	0d.
John	-	19	"	£2 0s.	0d.
Richard	-	17	"	£1 6s.	0d.
James	-	14	"	16s.	0d.
Elizabeth	-	12	"	2s.	0d.
Total with his own wages:				£7 10s.	0d. a month. (36)

Another miner earning £3 a month, depended upon the earnings of his children for another £1 a month. (37) A third claimed that he had continued working in a very unhealthy part of the mine, because he feared that if he refused to do so, not only he, but also his children would be turned away from the mine. (38)

Children in the Cornish mines usually began work at about seven or eight. Boys most frequently commenced underground work at the age of ten or twelve. (39) Such scattered evidence as survives, suggests that the ages at which children commenced work did not substantially alter from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Henry Carter (b. 1749) began work at the tin stamps at the age of nine or ten. (40) Samuel Drew (b. 1765) became a buddle boy at the age of eight (41) and a memoir published in 1811 states that its subject received no education as a child, a condition which was "too common" in the county in consequence of poor children being from a "very early period" employed to work in the mines. The subject was born in 1781. (42)

It was not necessarily the case that the miner's children were employed at the mines. Samuel Drew's elder brother assisted his father in running his small farm. This was probably frequently the case in the eighteenth century when occupations were more genuinely mixed, than in the nineteenth century when collateral activities were more clearly secondary. A family economy could well be mixed, although the father was employed as a full time miner, the wife and children filling in the labour gap created by the father's more full time commitment to mining. It is also probable that with the rise of copper mining, the family economy as a whole became more

specialised. This was not only because the demands of this capitalising industry for labour was a demand which worked against the small farms of the eighteenth century, but also because the tasks connected with the preparation of copper ores were much more intensive of child and female labour than were those connected with the preparation of tin ores. Some miner's daughters continued to be employed in domestic service. (43)

The period when it was most difficult for the married miner to make ends meet was the period before his children were old enough to work. Barham remarked that so long as the children were too young to work, then the degree of embarrassment increased with their number. Since miners tended to marry young, and the women were not infrequently pregnant at marriage, the embarrassment of young children was one which came early to the miner. (44)

It does not seem to have been normal for the wives of miners to continue their employment at the mines after marriage. The graph given above (facing p. 12) shows that there were in 1851, 1,311 females in the copper mines aged between 15 and 20; 760 between 20 and 25; and less than 300 between 25 and 30. Above the age of 30 there were very few female labourers indeed.

The wife was nevertheless a very important determiner of the living standard of the family. On her management of the income could well depend the difference between squalor and tolerable comfort.*

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*See two pieces of evidence taken in 1864.

> "You will find two men, and one has got a clean, decent, wholesome, industrious wife, and that man's children will be kept as clean and comfortable as possible. You will then see one of the same "pare" who has got a dirty, careless wife, and that family will be in rags, and yet that man will make the same earnings. One man will be well off and the other always in misery." (P.P. 1864 p. 43)

> "There is a women living about four or five miles from Pensance, she has a husband and four or five boys who are all working in the mine, and I calculate that they are earning from £11 to £13 or £14 a month, and yet they have not got a chair to sit down upon; there is scarcely a cup or saucer in the place, and as for a bed, what they have would disgrace the poorest persons in the kingdom." (P.P. 1864 p. 146).

Middle class Victorians were all too prone to attribute poverty to bad housekeeping, but their contention that the employment of girls at the mines from childhood left them deficient in experience and training in running a home, certainly contains a deal of truth.

The Wesleyan Minister at St. Just found the mine girls when they married were "very deficient in domestic work, unable to make and mend." (45) A doctor thought that the frequency of stomach disorders among the working miners was in part due to deficiency in culinary knowledge of the young women which lead to a crude and coarse preparation of the miner's food. (46)

Experience is a good teacher, and necessity makes its lessons the more unforgettable. There is no reason to believe that the inadequacy of Cornish housewives was other than a temporary deficiency. What did increase the difficulty of the housewife in controlling expenditure was the system of wage payment prevailing at the mines. A miner's wife complained to a visitor in 1838, that because her husband insisted on working as a tributer, the fluctuation of his earnings was such that she never knew how much she had to spend. (47) The widely spaced paydays, once a month or even every two months, also increased the housewife's difficulties. Wives who had returned from overseas mines with their husbands were heard to lament that wages were not paid weekly in Cornwall as they sometimes were overseas. (48)

Housing

The cottages of the miners, scattered over the mining districts, with white-washed walls and thatched or grey slated roofs, presented to some observers an attractive sight, and to one observer in particular, in 1841, gave the general impression of a prevalence of a state of comfort. (49)

To those with noses for sanitation as well as eyes for the picturesque, this was a short lived impression. The evidence which survives on workers' housing in the eighteenth century suggests the prevalence of deplorable housing standards. The typical miner's cottage was very small, usually

consisting of only two rooms. (50) The fact that William Jenkin in 1799 naturally refers to the self-built cottages of the miners as "little huts" (51) is fairly indicative of their dimensions. Pryce also employs the word "hut" to describe a miner's habitation.

An industrial archeologist who has surveyed the surviving physical evidence on industrial housing in the Cornwall of the Industrial Revolution, writes of the miners' cottages:

> "Apparently charming cottages were often hideously overcrowded. The thick walls and comfortable-looking thatch hid floors of beaten earth, or more usually a mixture of lime and ash which was little better than beaten earth, and continually damp. Moreover those solid cob walls often suffered badly from damp and rats. There was rarely any trace of a damp proof course, and usually no proper foundations." (53)

Windows were few and small, though some compensation for the lack of light was offered by the use of the "hepse" or half-door. (54)

In terms of furnishings the cottages were no less lacking than they were in terms of structure. Pryce, who was a mine surgeon, complained that after a mine accident, the victim was taken home to a "hut" full of half naked children and "destitute of all conveniences, and almost of all necessaries. The whole indeed is a scene of such complicated wretchedness and distress, as words have no power to describe." (55)

Jenkin in 1796 thought it, "enough to make a man's heart to bleed to see their bedding." (56) He also pointed out that in times of steeply rising prices, families were sometimes forced to sell what little furniture they possessed in order to buy bread, and said that in this context he was not even talking about the very poor, but about persons who, "do not fall under the description of parish poor or paupers." (57)

If housing improved in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was only a matter of relative betterment. Clement Carlyon, in a study of the conditions which produced endemic typhus in the county, had this to say of housing in the mining districts in 1827:

> " ithin the circuit of the parishes ... besides towns and villages much in want of sanitary regulations, there are extensive and barren downs, and wet and dreary moors, over which are scattered groups of comfortless cob-houses and numberless single cottages, wretchedly built and damp and dirty in the extreme. At their doors may be seen the usual mud-pools, which in winter overflow and render the approach to them inconvenient, whilst in summer these semi-fluid accumulations of putrid slime, continue to exhale offensive and deleterious miasmata from their dark green surfaces." (58)

He agreed that some of the cottages looked charming enough:

> "Their spruce gardens, surrounded with a low wall in front, and the green meadows adjoining, imparts an air of cleanliness and neatness, which naturally leads to the persuasion that such must be abodes of well regulated families. Yet even of these, the courtlets will be too frequently found deficient in commodious and cleanly arrangement." (59)

In the mining town of Redruth, *liquid, stagnant filth was allowed* to accumulate in open pits even in the immediate neighbourhood of houses "remarkable for their neatness." (60)

Carlyon's descriptions are supported from other sources, a local newspaper said of the mining village of Chacewater in 1853, that it entirely lacked any underground drainage or sewage system, the whole of the filth being carried off on the surface. The cholera had visited the village severely in 1849, and given the deplorable sanitary condition of the village, was likely to do so again. (61) The Sanitary commissioners of 1842 found equally noxious conditions in the mining town of Camborne. The miners kept pigs in styes close behind their houses, and carefully fostered a dung heap in an adjacent catch pit. (62) Carlyon had come across these catch pits in 1827, and found it very difficult to convince the miners of the health risk connected with this means of manuring their gardens. (63)

The St. Just region was exhibiting a similarly unhealthy aspect in 1864:

> "In situation nothing could be healthier than the St. Just region, but the conditions are utterly pestilential. The houses are surrounded by pools of green slime through which one has to pick one's way to the door. There is no drainage whatsoever

and all the refuse is thrown out on dustheaps situated in front of the door." (64)

In structural terms there may have been some improvement over the eighteenth century conditions. Barham reported in 1842, that the miners occupied for the most part "decent cottages", often with four rooms, though often with still only two. In the central mining districts they were usually stone built, and frequently collected in rows. Thatched cottages were more common in the west and cob walls in the east. (65) Not all the miners cottages were of this quality, for although it was estimated that a cottage could be built for as little as £35 to £50, (66) what Barham described as "hovels of a very miserable description", had been built by miners "of a less reputable class." Some of these were built on sites excavated in the hill-sides so that on one or perhaps two sides, their roofs rose but little above the level of the adjoining ground. Such dwellings were chiefly found on the outskirts of the mining districts. (67)

In 1864 it was estimated that a "good substantial house", consisting of a living room and scullery downstairs, and two or three bedrooms upstairs, could be built for about £80, but it was again pointed out that cottages in some of the outlying districts were deficient in both quality and dimensions.(68) Some of the evidence collected in 1842 suggests that the problem of overcrowding was being to some extent alleviated.* This may have been true to some extent in the central and western mining districts, but it was certainly not true of the eastern districts. With the spectacular rise of the eastern mines after 1830, a migration of miners from the older districts caused a great shortage of housing. (69) The population of Calstock which was just over two and a half thousand in 1841, was more than four and a half by 1851

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*Evidence of Stephen Davy (p. 830) that formerly families occupied only one room each, but by then they had generally separate houses. See also the evidence of the parish Overseer for Redruth (p. 829).

(see graph no p. I). The population of Tywardreath more than doubled between 1821 and 1841, (for further examples of this rapid population growth see graph no p. I).

With such a pressure on available housing, rents were high and lodgers were taken in at the cost of overcrowding already overcrowded houses. The houses in East Gunnislake in 1864 were said to be heavily overcrowded and sanitary conditions to be very bad. When a witness was asked if the Sanitary Act had ever been put into force, he replied that he had been chairman of the committee for two years, and after trying unsuccessfully to get the house owners to meet the requirements of the act, he and his colleagues were thrown off the committee by the owners of the miners' cottages, and a set of men were put in "purposely not to carry the act out." (70)

Some of the arrivals from the west built their own cottages of a poorer kind. They usually contained only two rooms, beaten earth floors, unceilinged roofs and small inadequate windows. (71) At Fowey Consols, special barracks were built for the men at the mines, in which batchelors or men from distant homes lodged during the week. (72)

So far the nature of housing has been described from general descriptions, in his autobiography, John Harris, provides a description of a particular miner's cottage; the one built by his grandfather in which he was born in 1820:

> "The place of my birth was a boulder-built cottage, with reedy roof, bare rafters, and clay floor ... The rough house had no back door, nor any windows looking northward, except one about a foot square in the little pantry: but on the south side it had four windows, and a porch of primitive granite, literally small unpolished boulders. The woodwork of the roof, was all visible, and sometimes the stars could be seen at night, though my father was sure to have a thick layer of reed put on as winter approached. There was no partition in the sleeping room, which ran from one end of the building to the other ... The eastern end wall was much injured in my grandmother's time, through the explosion of a bag of gunpowder, which my uncle Mathew was foolishly drying before the fire." (73)

In the mid-nineteenth century, household furnishings undoubtedly improved. The following is a list of articles said to be contained in a two room dwelling in 1842:

"Kitchen Table		10s.	0d.
3 chairs		7s.	6d.
Baker and Iron		4s.	0d.
3 spoons			3d.
3 wine glasses			9d.
Spare table		4s.	0d.
Bellows		2s.	0d.
2 water pitchers			6d.
Wash tray		2s.	6d.
3 cups and saucers			6d.
Set of china		7s.	6d.
Buffet	£1	0s.	0d.
2 candlesticks		2s.	0d.
Form		2s.	6d.
Iron crock		2s.	0d.
3 knives and forks		1s.	6d.
3 teaspoons		3s.	0d.
3 rummers		1s.	6d.
Tea tray		2s.	0d.
Chamber brush		1s.	6d.
Earthenware pan			6d.
Looking glass		1s.	6d.
Bed and bedding	£5	0s.	0d.
Clothes box		10s.	0d.
Firegrate		3s.	0d.
Tea kettle		2s.	6d.
Candlesticks			3½d.
Plates and basins		5s.	0d.
Contingencies	£1	0s.	0d.
	£10	18s.	3½d. (74)

These were said to be the possessions of a couple who had not married under especially favourable circumstances. Miners marrying in circumstances of a greater comparative affluence were said to make the following additions:

"To the quality of the above articles	£3	10s.	0d.
Watch or clock	£1	10s.	0d.
Extra clothes and ring	£5	0s.	0d.
Expenses fee etc. on wedding day	£1	0s.	0d.
Chest of drawers	£2	2s.	0d.
Bible etc., etc.		10s.	0d.
	£24	10s.	3½d.

If these were the expenses of moderately off miners, then it is clear that there were a great many miners who could not be regarded at that time as moderately well off. At a Redruth meeting in 1844, a surgeon gave the

following description of miners' cottages, which recalls that of Pryce in 1778 (above p.104):

> "These buildings often consisted of only two or three rooms, and it often happened that when a miner was brought home wounded, the first thing that had to be done was to get poles to prop up the bedroom so as to admit the additional weight of a surgeon and the other persons that might be necessary at such a time. Then the staircases were so narrow that a wounded man could hardly be got up many of them without the greatest difficulty and danger. Often there was only one bed in the house in which a man his wife and children usually slept, and the children in times of accident, had to be quartered on their neighbours. Even the beds were of such a character that a miner's fractured leg frequently had to be reset in consequence of the sacking of the bed giving away." (75)

Fuel was in short supply in the sparsely wooded mining districts. The county contained no coal deposits, and the poor were said sometimes to make use of dried dung, (76) but more commonly they used turf or dried furze. The latter was especially common, and because of the fierceness with which it burnt, was on more than one occasion the cause of the tragic death of a young child. (77)

In following the fortunes of the mines the miners moved frequently from one cottage to another. It was said in 1838 that one was as likely to find a cruiser at the port where one left her as find a miner's family in the house which they occupied on a last visit. (78) If a miner obtained what the same writer described as "that grand desideratum among miners", a house of his own, (79) then this movement from one cottage to another tended to cease, and in consequence the miner and his children had often to walk several miles to work and back each day.

Diet

> "Curty milk an' barley-bread no lack,
> Pudden-skins an' good shaipe chack,
> A bussa o' salted pilchers 'nother o' pork,
> A Good strong stummick and a plenty o' work." (80)

The main components of the miner's diet in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries were: barley flour, potatoes, and salted pilchards. The flour was baked in the form of bread, and in the 'pasty' to provide a pastry jacket for a filling of potatoes, turnips, fish or occasionally meat. Pig keeping provided occasional supplies of bacon and pork. Tea was almost universally drunk.

Evidence suggests that the miners consumed mainly barley and not wheaten bread, and that there was no significant shift to wheaten bread before the mid-nineteenth century. Several sources describe barley as the chief source of the miner's support in 1795, (81) and in a petition against the Beer Act got up in 1831, barley was referred to as "the staff of life" to the Cornish miner. (82) The evidence collected by Dr. Barham in 1842, indicates that barley was still more widely used than wheat. A witness from the western mining districts said that barley bread was much used there, more than in the eastern districts. (83) The specimen family budget presented in evidence in that year includes a weekly purchase of 20 pounds of barley but only five pounds of wheat. (84)*

Potato cultivation was widespread by the mid-eighteenth century, and became an increasingly important dietary component as the century progressed. The county was fortunate in being climatically suited to the production of two crops a year. One was planted in April and drawn at Christmas to last until the following Autumn, the other was drawn at Midsummer to last until Christmas. (85) Just how important potato consumption was, is revealed by the widespread distress which accompanied the disease caused failure of the crop in 1846-7.

Fish consumption was high. Pilchards were an important dietary item. An essential protein source, their cheapness must have kept many a poor miner's family alive in hard times. In 1785 pilchards were said to be the

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*The Penny Magazine in 1836 refers to a "partial adoption of wheat." (vol. v. p. 198).

chief winter support of the miners; "their distress is ever complicated with that of the fishing." (86) Jenkin in 1795 said of the poor families in his neighbourhood that they had taken in a winter stock of pilchards, which with a small plot of potatoes, "sets them above want." (87) The pilchards were salted and stored in large stone jars known as "bussas", and it was more often the price of salt, rather than the price of fish which was a limiting factor on the size of the stock. It was said of the western districts in 1842, that next to bread and potatoes, fish was the chief food of the inhabitants. (88)

In 1795 a letter from Penzance complained of the dearness of provisions; "particularly barley and potatoes, which articles with salt fish and tea are their chief and almost their only support." (89) Jenkin in 1800 remarks that in the Redruth district a great number of families never provided themselves with any other kind of food than barley bread, potatoes and salt pilchards from one week to another, "with which they sip what they call Tea, (little better than warm water without milk or sugar.")(90) In 1801 he wrote of bad barley bread and salt pilchards as having been the chief support of the poor for weeks or even months past. (91) In 1810 Christopher Wallis referred to fish and potatoes as, "usual fare" of the poor.* (92)

This basic diet seems to have changed little by the mid-nineteenth century. The pasty may have become more generally used, but this was only a different presentation of barley flour and potatoes, with perhaps a little meat. The daily fare of the miner in 1842, as it appears from the evidence collected by Dr. Barham, consisted generally of three meals which differed little from the eighteenth century diet. Breakfast was of barley bread and milk, sometimes with butter; dinner (mid-day meal) taken at work, was of

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*See also William Lovett (b. 1800): "our food consisted of barley bread, fish and potatoes, with a bit of pork on Sundays." (W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1920 ed.) vol. 1 p. 13

necessity something which could be carried without difficulty, and eaten cold. The pasty was favoured, but poverty sometimes dictated the "hobban" a lump of flour baked into a heavy cake to which either potatoes or raisons were added. (93) The main meal of the day was supper, which consisted of potatoes with pork or fish, or perhaps bacon and eggs. (94) This was the meal programme of day shift working, should the miner be on night shift, then of course the timing of the meals would differ.

The miners ate very little meat. One told the Commission of 1864, that at normal wages they could afford only about 3 or 3½ lbs. of meat a week for their families. (95) A doctor told the same Commissioners, that the miners did not eat much "animal food", not nearly the quantity which they ought to have to sustain the hard labour which they performed. The meat content of the pasty was small. In 1864 it was said of the people of the mining districts, that they made almost everything into pasties, which consisted of "a crust of flour and various kinds of vegetables, potatoes, and onions and apples, and a very little meat, all combined together very frequently." (96) In 1842 the miners were said to eat, "cold potato pasties with perhaps a small quantity of salted pork baked in them." (97)

The pasty was not considered by medical opinion to be a suitable food for men whose digestions were weakened by the nature of their employment. (98) Few miners retained the healthy appetites of youth after years of underground working. Frequently the miner brought his pasty home from work untouched because he had no appetite to eat it. (99)

The habit of taking food to work seems to have developed during the nineteenth century. It was remarked in 1835 that miners formerly used to work through their shift without food, (100) and even after the practice became general, circumstances could still strain family resources beyond the point of providing a lunch time meal for all the working members of the family. An agent at Fowey Consols reported in 1842, that he had observed some of the surface girls steal away to eat their meal behind a hedge, ashamed of the

meanness of their fare. He had also noticed the occasional faintness of young women at work for which he believed malnutrition was responsible. (101)

When the staple foods of barley, fish and potatoes failed, then subsistence became very precarious indeed. A visitor to the county in 1789, witnessed women in the mining districts reduced to gathering snails to make broth for their families. (102) In 1795 persons were said to have fainted at their work through hunger, and the fear was expressed that great numbers in the west of the county would perish through absolute hunger.* (103) The circumstances which attended such bad years and the reactions which they provoked from the hungry poor have been described in the following section.

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*In the crisis year of 1801, workers at Tin Croft, were said to be unable to perform half of their normal amount of labour because of weakness caused by under-nourishment. (Jenkin Mss. Jenkin to John Cole, 31st. Jan. 1801).

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CROWD BEHAVIOUR - DIRECT ACTION PROTEST

Introduction

The Cornish miners of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries showed a marked readiness to turn out in force, and attempt to enforce their wishes by direct action. The most frequent of such ephemeral outbursts of collective action, were the food riots which were the almost inevitable accompaniment of years of high food prices. There were other occasions, however, when the opinions and attitudes of the labouring miners were forcibly expressed in outbreaks of disturbance and demonstration.

This section describes the types of crowd action resorted to by the miners. The descriptions which follow should indicate that these disturbances exhibit a noticeable similarity of characteristics. There is no single sociological term which can be used without qualification, to embody all these common characteristics. Sociologists categorise forms of collective behaviour of the ephemeral disturbance type under a variety of subdivisions: "mob", "riot", and "crowd", are all applied to popular disturbances with varying degrees of precision. What are the descriptive implications of these terms, and how useful are they in categorising the Cornish disturbances?

"Crowd" is the most broadly descriptive of the categories and embraces the others. Definitions of what constitutes a crowd vary, but we can justifiably, as Professor Rude does in the Crowd in History, assume the crowd to be what sociologists term a "face to face" or "direct contact" group. (1) Wider definitions which embrace large population groups are not helpful in the analysis of the phenomena with which we are concerned.

The definition of Fredrich Elkin is useful:

> "A crowd proper might be defined as an aggregate of human beings in physical proximity, brought into direct and temporary contact with strong rapport and mutual stimulation." (2)

"Temporary" is important. Collective organisations such as political parties, church memberships, trade unions etc., are better described as "associations",

and exhibit different action patterns, generally in accordance with a prescribed procedure. Panic reactions must also be excluded. Although without doubt a mass phenomenom, a panic is basically an aggregate of individual fears, in which although the participants experience a common fear, they do not feel a collective rapport, each individual being concerned with his own immediate future.

"Riot" is clearly descriptive of a recurrent type of crowd action, but it is a less comprehensive term, which is not really applicable to peaceful demonstrations:

> "A riot is an outbreak of temporary, but violent mass disorder." (3)

Riot is the descriptive term most frequently used by contemporary observers of direct collective action. Often it is used with justification since violence was evident in many cases. But the similarities in motivation and forms of action between protests which were violent and those which were not, are more striking and analytically revealing, than measurements of the degree of violence present. Many of the disturbances over high grain prices could fairly be described as riots, others clearly could not. Although the Annual Register saw fit to describe a Cornish disturbance of 1831 as a riot, there was no violence involved in what was a peaceful and orderly demonstration (below p.154). Whether violent or peaceful, food riots conformed to the same patterns of intent and appealed to the same moral justification. Since it is this underlying pattern of collective behaviour which is to be uncovered, riot is insufficiently comprehensive to form a satisfying general title to this section.

"Mob" is open to similar objections. It has connotations of violence which make it applicable to some instances only. It also implies a low status on the part of the individuals comprising the direct action group, which in contemporary descriptions gives it hardly less emotive content than "rabble".

What is left is a qualified use of the term "crowd". If anything this

is too comprehensive and so demands qualification. Crowds can be active or passive: the audience at a theatre, the spectators at a football match, constitute a crowd, as does the congregation at a church service. The crowd with which we are concerned is an active one, indeed it is more, it is active with a purpose. A purpose which unlike a panic aggregate is a collective one. It forms because a number of individuals have a common purpose in achieving a certain end, and seek to achieve it by acting in a collective manner. Necessarily, since direct action is implicit, there must be an area of conflict. The crowd is attempting to accomplish by direct action, something which is against the wishes of an opposed group or individual.

There are also likely to be present notions of "extra-legal justice", that is the crowd will believe its actions to be not only morally justified, but also lawful. It might indeed regard itself as supplying the deficiencies of the properly constituted forces of the law.

In the following section, particularly with respect to disturbances over food prices, the term "riot" will be generally employed, since the historian cannot easily dispense with the terminology which characterises the contemporary documentation. Nevertheless it must be kept in mind that the term is often sociologically imprecise and in many cases a misleading description of what actually took place. It is for this reason that the section as a whole has been entitled, "Crowd Behaviour: Direct Action Protest."

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The Food Riot

By far the most frequent type of popular disturbance in Cornwall, as elsewhere in Britain, during this period was that occasioned by high food prices and corn shortages. The English food riot, superficially discussed by economic and social historians in the past, has in recent years begun to receive its merited attention. The researches of Professor Rude, Mr. R.B. Rose, and Mr. E.P. Thompson among others have clearly revealed that the frequent outbreaks of food rioting in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain were very far from being the blind, unreasoning protests of the delinquent, empty-bellied poor against abuses which in the true order of things could not be removed: in Mr. Thompson's words:

> "The examination of food riots reveals a tissue of customary practices, in marketing, milling and baking which amount to a popular 'moral economy' at variance with the assumptions of the rulers." (1)

The conflict inherent in the food riot, was between those who favoured, and were in fact operating a free trade in grain, and the labouring poor, who maintained that the trade should be regulated in the interests of supplying them with bread corn at a "just Price".

There were several categories of food riot. Mr. Rose has identified four main types, ranging from simple outbreaks of looting, through riots directed against the exportation of corn, to direct action by rioters to impose food prices on the market, and fourthly attempts by mob pressure to force local magistrates to decree maximum prices. (2) All of these categories can be found in Cornwall, with a fifth form also distinguishable, a form to which Cornish rioters frequently resorted. This was the invasion in force of the agricultural districts in search of farmers withholding grain from the markets, to force them to sign agreements binding them to bring their grain to the next market. This was related to the attempts to prevent grain exportation, in that it was often suspected that the hoarded grain was intended for exportation, but the fact that the scene of conflict was the farm and not the

port makes it more useful to consider this type of food riot as a distinct form.

Mr. Rose suggests that the English price fixing riot originated in Oxfordshire in 1693, and that there are sound reasons for selecting the closing decade of the seventeenth century as the period during which the price fixing riot first achieved historical significance. Professor Barnes study of the English Corn Laws, emphasises that 1660 marks a watershed in government policy. Before the Restoration, under the elaborate paternal bureaucracy of the Tudors and Stuarts, the interest of the consumer was regarded as predominant. The activities of corn dealers were closely checked, and exportation was restricted when the price rose above certain levels.

By contrast after 1660, the producer received fully as much consideration as the consumer. Practically all restrictions on the activities of the internal corn trader were removed by a law of 1663, which also placed a duty on imported corn. (3) In explanation of why it was not until the sixteen-nineties that dissatisfaction with this state of affairs showed itself in rioting, Mr. Rose points out that there was a counteracting influence in the series of good harvests, which, with the exception of 1684, ran from 1680 to 1692, after this harvests were not really good again for almost a quarter of a century:

> "Only in the 1690's therefore, did the English people face, for the first time, the test of bad harvests and scarcity in the new political conditions, with on the one hand, a local magistracy no longer prepared to impose controls on the markets and the dealers as in Tudor and Stuart days, and on the other, a system of regulation designed explicitly to encourage exports, discourage imports and keep prices high. It is from this period, therefore, that we may date with some confidence the growing prevalence of hunger riots and price fixing riots." (4)

Most writers on the subject have noticed that certain groups of homogenous industrial workers had an above average tendency to resort to food rioting. In this context, the Staffordshire potters, Tyneside keelmen, Kingswood colliers, and the Wiltshire and Somerset weavers have been

mentioned. (5) It was almost certainly the Cornish miners, however, who used this type of direct action protest more frequently than any other occupational group. Between 1727 and 1847, there were no less than nineteen years during which food rioting of one kind or another occurred. The widespread Cornish rioting of 1847 was almost certainly the last significant year of food rioting in England. Edward Thompson has described the Cornish miners as having, "an irascible consumer consciousness, and a readiness to turn out in force." (6)

Although, as Mr. Rose points out, in its spread from its Oxfordshire starting point in 1693, passing westwards through Bristol in 1709, and Somerset in 1753, the price fixing riot did not reach Cornwall until 1766, (7) it only represented an addition to methods of conducting protests over high corn prices in the county. The tradition of direct action over food shortages had begun at least as early as 1727, even if until that time the specific form of price fixing in the market place had not reached Cornwall.

In the following pages, the situational economic background to Cornish food riots will be examined. This will be followed by a chronological description of recorded instances of food rioting from 1727 to 1847, which in turn will be followed by an analysis of the phenomenology of the riots, examining the areas of conflict, the forms of action, the composition of the crowd, its leadership and its hopes and achievements. Finally the food riot situation will be briefly examined from the point of view of those ranks of Cornish society responsible for maintaining law and order in the mining districts.

The Background to the Food Riot

In the seventeenth century, Cornwall was on balance an exporter of corn. (8) This situation was rapidly changed by the rise of the mining industry, which created a specialised labour force dependent for its food supply on an agricultural sector whose productivity was increasing at a much slower rate

than the industrial sector.

William Borlase commented on the changing situation in 1758:

> "The inhabitants since Elizabethan times are more advanced in numbers than the tillage has increased in proportion, and though the lowlands in Cornwall, especially along the Tamar and Allan, may yield more corn than the inhabitants of those parts and the less fruitful hundreds of Stratton and Lesnewyth can dispense with, yet the hundreds of Powder, Kerrier and Penwith, and the western parts of Pydar (far the most populous tracts of our county) do not yield corn near sufficient to supply the inhabitants. Upon the whole, if those parts entirely addicted to husbandry will yield a sufficiency of grain to make up in a moderate year what is wanting in the parts less cultivated and more addicted to mining, this is full as much as can be expected in this particular. In a plentiful year we may spare a little quantity for exportation, in a moderate year have enough for ourselves, in a year of scarcity not near a competency." (9)

Throughout the eighteenth century, as the industrial labour force grew, the problem of corn supply became increasingly serious. Dr. Rowe has suggested that, taking the county as a whole, cereal production in Cornwall was probably adequate in most seasons to about 1780. (10) The Cornish contributions to the Annals of Agriculture in the 1790's indicate that by this time the county had no claims to self-sufficiency. A correspondent in 1795 remarked:

> "This county, in plentiful years, does not supply more than two thirds of what is consumed in it." (11)

In the same year another writer stated that one half of the miners' bread corn was made from flour imported from the Isle of Wight. (12) Doubts were expressed that the non-mining parts of the county would be able to supply the needs of the mining districts for the following year of 1796. (13)

The western mining districts were not the only pull on the grain surplus of eastern Cornwall. They competed with the growing urban settlements of Plymouth and Dock (now Devonport) across the Tamar. These settlements although outside the county, were much the nearer in geographical terms. Corn intended for Plymouth Dock was stopped by a mob in 1801 at Torpoint on the Cornish side of the river. (14) In some instances the farmers of the eastern districts found it more convenient to sell their produce in large quantities

to merchants, than to send it piecemeal to the scattered western markets. (15)

As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, the basic bread corn of the miners was barley, and although most of them probably preferred wheaten bread when they could afford it, there is no evidence to suggest that any prejudice against barley bread existed.

The miners needed to be able to purchase the barley, either in the form of grain, or at such times as imported flour was available, in the form of flour. Local supplies were generally bought in grain form and taken to the millers for grinding. There appears to have been little demand for bakers' bread. Partly because the miners' wives baked their own, and partly because of the taste for flour baked in the form of the traditional pasties, or else in the form of hobbans, a type of heavy unleavened dough cake. Outside of the towns, an assize of bread would have had little relevance in Cornwall.

Ideally the miners needed to be supplied with barley, sold to them at prices which bore a reasonable relationship to the size of their earnings, and in small quantities, since they would but rarely have the capital necessary to lay in a season's supply at one purchase. The farmers were to bring sufficient corn to the markets to meet the needs of the labouring miners, who were to receive a priority of satisfying their basic needs, before sales were made to cornfactors interested in buying the grain for resale at a profit. The miners could then take their corn to the millers, who would grind it for them, abstracting the customary tolls, but not seeking undue profits. It was regarded as the producers moral responsibility to see that the local markets did not lack supplies of grain before sending any of his produce further afield.

In practice the system failed to conform to this ideal model and broke down at several weak points. The enforcement of legal and customary restrictions on profiteering from the grain supply of the poor, was at best haphazard, at worst non-existent. Moral condemnation was more often expressed than was positive action taken.

In Cornwall there is little evidence to suggest that the millers were seriously suspected by the poor as being exploiters; that is to say few of the activities of food rioting crowds were directed against them. Nonetheless it was a Cornish member, Sir Francis Basset, who proposed in the House of Commons in 1795, that the law relating to millers' tolls should be changed claiming that:

> "The Toll, as now taken, is certainly extremely oppressive to the Poor, who pay the most when they can the least afford it; and if frauds are ever practised by millers, they are most likely to take place when there is the greatest temptation, that is when corn bears a high price." (16)

The old bogeymen of the poor, badgers, regraters, and forestallers, undoubtedly operated in the county, but the limited survival of Quarter Sessions records makes it impossible to say whether such practices were dealt with by magistrates in the eighteenth century. No action of this kind appears to have been taken by them in the nineteenth century.*

The weakest point in the Cornish system was the preference of the farmers for disposing of their corn in large quantities to merchants and factors, rather than undergo the trouble of selling in small quantities in local markets. The seriousness of this practice from the viewpoint of the small consumer was not just that bringing in the factors enhanced the price, but that very often corn thus disposed of to middlemen never reached the local markets, but was transported to distant markets.

Cornfactors operated in the county with especial zeal in times of general bad harvests. London merchants appointing agents to buy up grain

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*That is no action against these practices in respect of corn. Two examples of action in respect of other commodities indicate that at least the notion of illegality was not dead. In July 1801 a Liskeard butcher was indicted at Quarter Sessions for regrating a pig. (Quarter Sessions Minute Book 1801 Mss. C.R.O.) and in 1838, the Truro authorities were troubled by the prevalence of forestalling at the vegetable market. The Mayor had hand-bills printed describing the offence, and warning of the penalties involved. He described the practice as "extorting money from the pockets of the poor." (West Briton 10 Aug. 1838)

locally. As in 1737 when a letter from a Falmouth factor to some London Merchants mentions three merchants in addition to himself engaged in the corn trade on this basis, and as well as at his own port of Falmouth, that he had stored grain at Padstow and Helston for transhipment to London. (17) It is likely that only in years of exceptionally grim corn shortages, did London merchants turn to any great extent to places as distant as Cornwall. The greatest pull from London would therefore be exerted at the very times when the local supply was at its most precarious. Cornish farmers were naturally tempted to sell grain in large quantities to factors, and have it removed from their hands, without having to run the risk of it turning bad, or the prospect of a good harvest to come drastically lowering the price of corn as the summer drew on.

Thus in years of scarcity, the paradoxical situation was likely to exist, of an increase in both imports to and exports from the county. The former as the Lords and adventurers made efforts to import supplies for their labourers, and the latter due to the demand from London and elsewhere. Such was the situation in 1795, when extensive supplies had to be imported at a time when farmers were refusing to sell corn in small quantities to the poor. (18)

Corn exports from the county in such years go back at least as far as 1727, as the riots of that year indicate. It is possible that the trade died down somewhat in the mid-century to be revived again in the final quarter, for the Corporation records of West Looe, in 1778 after noting that for a long time there had been neither export nor import of grain, went on to report:

> "Now for some years past it hath become a great trade amongst them as cornfactors, to buy very large quantities of corn among the country farmers and to lodge the same in their lofts and cellars in the borough and from thence to take the same on board ships or vessels." (19)

The crucial months for the poor were those of spring and early summer when the supplies of the previous harvest were running out. Although fish

formed an important part of the miner's diet, the pilchard season had not begun when in bad years grain supplies were running out in March and April. By this time too, supplies of pilchards salted from the previous season's cat h were also running out. The famine year of 1812 saw a record catch, but in the Autumn too late to alleviate the scarcity problem.

Potatoes were also an important dietary item, but it remains true that whilst other items might make the difference between bare necessity and tolerable sufficiency, they were by no means sufficient in bad years to remedy a serious failure in the grain harvest.

A Chronological A count of Cornish Food Rioting

The first major outbreak of rioting began in the winter of 1727; a year marked by great distress in the county. Rioting broke out in several towns, but was e pecially serious around Falmouth.

The Mayor and Corporation of that town wrote to the Secretary of State on the 16th November, reporting that the unruly tinners who had been troubling other towns in the county:

> "... came on Tue day last hither in a great body armed with clubs. Insulted the town and broke open and plundered several cellars or granarys of corn, and yesterday returned upon us again with mor by computation than 2,000 —— and committed the like violence."

The visits had been occasioned by a shortage of corn, but on a second visit they also seized a quantity of salt.

A garrison of troops from nearby Pendennis Castle, had come to the assistance of the town, but being only thirty strong, were able to do little more than stand by. The Mayor claimed that the poor of the town were, "uninclined to act in our defence", but fear as much as sympathy with the miners' need of corn might have accounted for this reluctance. The rioters had threatened, should one of their number be killed either by the soldiers or the townspeople, to "reduce the town to ashes and kill every soul in it."

In the face of which threat with inadequate forces to hand, it was decided to offer no resistance. (20)

The government despatched troops to Falmouth, but there were still threats of further riots. The Mayor requested on the 18th December that the troops be allowed to remain at Falmouth a little longer. (21) Sporadic outbreaks in the county continued into January 1728, on the 11th of which month, the Duke of Newcastle, the then Secretary of State, conveyed to the Secretary at War, the King's authorisation for further troops to be sent to the county:

> "On account of an Insurrection of many of the tinners who being joined by the rabble of several parishes have committed great disorders and are too numerous to be suppressed by ye Civil Power alone." (22)

Further west in the neighbourhood of Penzance, rioting also broke out. Here the situation was saved by Sir John St. Aubyn, who advanced to the tinners a "sufficient sum of money to prevent them from starving and from the necessity of plundering their neighbours." (23)

Early in March, Truro was being threatened, and the town council took the precaution of placing a hundred and twenty of the townspeople under arms. (24) In May Falmouth was again being threatened and the Corporation wrote to Newcastle requesting that a man of war be sent to the port. A ropemaker named Deeble, had been visited by three tinners who had informed him:

> "that the tinners in general were mustering up what arms they could possibly get and fitting them for use, that they, the tinners, would wait till Friday next the market day at the town of Redruth and that in case there did not come in a sufficient quantity of corn to supply their occasions that the whole body of tinners would come and attack the town."

Deeble told them that if they came the soldiers and townspeople would join together to repulse them. To this the tinners replied that they would be five or six thousand strong and would attack the town from all sides and that if any of them were killed they would raze the town by fire, if no corn

was to be found they would take goods, money or anything they could lay their hands on and finally they amplified what might be expected from them if any of their number were killed: they would destroy everybody they met and "make the town run with blood." (25)

There is no record that the tinners did visit Falmouth on this occasion. It is to be assumed either that their wants were satisfied at Redruth market, or that the Man of War arrived in time to scare them off. Such threats as these tinners made were clearly bombast; part of a war of nerves, but that they could be taken seriously by the townspeople is indicative of the fear and horror which they had of the inhabitants of the mining villages in times of dearth.

In the early spring of 1729, riots again broke out in the county. A petition was sent by the justices to the Secretary of State requesting that a Royal Proclamation be issued as:

> "... the said tinners and others have ravaged up and down the country in a very insolent manner and in great numbers, presuming so far as to break open and to enter dwelling-houses and out houses, out of which they have forcibly carried off great quantities of corn." (26)

The justices sent in the names of twelve persons to be named in the proclamation, which was issued on the 26th March. (27) The twelve named came from four different parishes. The proclamation had some effect for within a month of its issue a Treasury reward of £120 was shared by six justices for the apprehension of three of the wanted men, who were executed. (28) A fourth, after being in hiding for several weeks was betrayed to the authorities and later executed. (29)

These riots took place in the neighbourhood of St. Austell. Further west an isolated incident took place at St. Ives. Early in April, a body of tinners from Redruth entered St. Ives intent on seizing any corn which they found there. They were met at the Churchyard by a superior force of townspeople, and shots were fired, the tinners retreating after their leader had been killed.

The people of St. Ives feared that a larger party of tinners would come from Redruth seeking revenge. They wrote to Lord Hobart the patron of the borough, requesting that he use his influence to get a detachment of troops to remain in the county despite the request of the inhabitants of Penzance where they were stationed that they be recalled. The people of St. Ives offered to bear the cost of the extended stay. (30)

In the event the matter was resolved in a rather unusual way. The leading inhabitants of Redruth wrote to the Mayor of St. Ives on the 14th May. The letter expressed their total disgust at the behaviour of the tinners, but begged that the request for troops and the rewards offered for arrest of the leaders be withdrawn, giving assurances for the future good behaviour of the tinners. Behind this request, lay the interests of commerce. It appears that since the incident the people of St. Ives had feared to attend Redruth market, and their custom was being missed. Enclosed with the letter was an apology from the leading rioters. A document unusual enough to be worth quoting in full: (Original spelling preserved).

"To the Worshipfall the Mayor of St. Ives
Present
May itt please yur Worship,
As whee are Sensible of oure faults and of ye damagge youre towne have received by the late disturbances made by us and severarell others therein and whee are hartily sorry and dew sincearly Repent of what its past and will for the future Beave oure selves towards you and all men as shall be come Good Chrisetians as your Worship and ye reste of ye Jentelmen of your town have given us sume hopes that you will not prosecute us so vigorously as you might, but would Rather Endever to mittigate (struck through and lessen substituted) oure punishment whee do as in duty bound return your Worship harty thanks for such your favourabel intenshons towards us and will upon all acions as much as lies in oure power Indever to make any sattisfaction you shall be pleased to Requiar from us for Richd Lemon he Came against us and touled us that there was but twenty or thirty men in ye Church yard and that they had nothing but powdar in there Guns and they desined nothing but should go fire them to make us afraide and that whee should rune away they would take oure hosses but that if whee would take his advice whee should Some go one way and some go the other and

that he did Beleve that if whee should gitt in the town that ye men in ye church yard would rune away and by his in Caridgement whee came into town (two words illegible) to oure great misfortin we are your Worship's most abedient and most humbel Servants.

(Signed by five men, four of whom use a mark)
Ridth. May ye 14th 1729." (31)

The people of St. Ives must have decided to accept this guarantee of good behaviour, for the Mayor wrote again to Lord Hobart thanking him for his assistance, but requesting that matters now be left as they stood. (32)

The next outbreak of serious rioting came in 1737. The first signs of trouble were once again at Falmouth. A corn merchant of that town, by the name of Pye, received a letter from the Mayor of Truro on the 18th September, warning him that on the previous Friday at Redruth market, the tinners had announced their intention of collecting at Chacewater on the 19th and marching to Falmouth to seize the corn which Pye had bought on behalf of London merchants and stored there. Pye had been buying in large quantities sufficient to greatly raise the price of grain locally. (33)

The letter was forwarded to the Duke of Newcastle by the Corporation of the town of Falmouth accompanied by a request for assistance. The receipt of the letter it was stated had, "put the town under the greatest consternation," the tinners were, "the same mob that invaded us about ten years since." It was requested that a Man of war be immediately despatched, and that thirty or forty of the troops already in the county, engaged in the suppression of smuggling activities be sent at once to aid the town. (34)

In the meantime the townspeople prepared to offer what resistance they could. About forty men were armed and placed in readiness, and on the morning of the 19th scouts were sent out into the mining districts, who reported back at 11 a.m., that the miners were on the move, and could be expected at the town by 1 o'clock.

En route the tinners passed through Penryn, where they halted and plundered a grain cellar, roughly handling several of the townspeople. The

townspeople regrouped in larger numbers and put to flight the tinners who numbered only about a hundred, discharging muskets and wounding several. The tinners thus never reached Falmouth although the townspeople remained in readiness. (35)

They did however return for a second attack on Penryn having increased their numbers to about four hundred. They carried off the corn of a merchant named Guide and plundered several other cellars, "where they heard the corn was taking in for exportation" (36)

There were fears from Padstow, where corn was also being stored for exportation to London, what a visit was to be expected, (37) but there were no further incidents, perhaps due to the fact that there was already a body of troops stationed in the county. A proclamation was issued in October, and a reward of £50 a head was offered for the apprehension of persons involved in the attack on Guide's warehouse. (38) The proclamation contained the names of nine tinners recognised by eye witnesses. (39)

Food rioting broke out again in 1748. Once again the scene was Penryn. The Gentleman's Magazine reported on 31st October:

> "At Penryn, Cornwall, was an insurrection of the tinners, who suspecting that some merchants laid up vast quantities of corn for exportation, assembled in great numbers, men, women, and children, broke up Mr. Heame's cellar at Penryn and took thence 600 bushels of wheat, then robbed the country people carrying their corn to market, next day returning in greater numbers, arm'd with clubs and bludgeons and threatening further mischief, the soldiers sent from Falmouth to quell the tumult, were obliged to fire upon them, by which two were killed and many wounded." (40)

This disturbance, designed to prevent the export of corn, took place on 7th October. About two or three hundred tinners had entered the town suddenly and unexpectedly. There was no time to assemble the townspeople, and only one justice was present. The tinners broke open the cellars of Benjamin Heame, described as, "a considerable merchant", and seized quantities of corn. The town quickly recovered from the shock, and when the drum to arms was beaten,

the tinners took off with their plunder, pursued by a detachment of soldiers from Pendennis. Much of the corn was recovered, and several of the rioters taken and placed in the custody of the soldiers, lest an attempt should be made to rescue them.

The following morning there was an early alarm of the tinners returning, to rescue their comrades and to regain the corn which had been recovered from them. These objects they threatened they would achieve, or would loot the town. The prisoners were hastily despatched under escort to Pendennis Castle. The Governor refused to admit them, and passing through Falmouth on their way back, they were rescued by the townspeople.

In the meantime, the Captain of the soldiers remaining at Penryn, drew up his men on the bowling green, where he was joined by the justices and gentlementof the town. Having only twenty nine men he was forced to send to Falmouth for reinforcements. Before this assistance could arrive, however, the tinners were in the town, "with firearms, pitch forks and other instruments of mischief, swearing destruction to all who should oppose them." They advanced as far as Heame's house which faced on to the green. The Mayor and his party advanced to meet them and read the Riot Act. The tinners seeing the advance of the better armed soldiers, turned and ran up the street, despite the attempts of one of their leaders to rally them by calling out, "Turn about and face them my lads", and threatening if they refused "to boot their brains out". Despite the efforts of the Captain to prevent any firing, in the excitement several muskets were discharged by the soldiers, and one of the rioters was killed. (41)

On the 13th October, confident after the repulsion of the rioters, the Mayor wrote to Lord Boscawen, asking him to recommend the Duke of Bedford to have the names of some of the rioters, "put upon the Gazette ... that we may be more properly directed in any public proceedings against the rioters which everybody concerned would most readily follow ..." He was further apprehensive that "so great an insult against authority" would result in more soldiers

being sent to Penryn, and he felt that they had already more than they could accommodate, and quite sufficient to protect the town against any future attempts by the tinners. The friends of the man shot by the soldiers were threatening to prosecute for murder, "but we think we have little reason to be in pain about that." (42)

On the 5th November the Mayor wrote to the Duke of Bedford, Secretary of State, enclosing affidavits against a few of the rioters who had been apprehended, and stressed that since the tinners gave no reason to suppose they were concerned at their conduct, there was great danger if the wickedness of such evil-designing people were not discouraged in a most effectual manner. (43)

Surviving court records give no indication of what sentence the apprehended men received. The Mayor was correct in believing that the tinners had found Penryn too well protected, for no further attacks were made.

The winter of 1756-7 sa further disturbances. Trouble began in December, when conditions were very severe indeed. A correspondent from the county wrote to the Sherborne Mercury:

> "Corn has not in the memory of the oldest person now living, been known to be so very dear after so good a harvest; if some course be not speedily taken the Poor must either be hanged or starved." (44)

In that month, several hundred tinners from St. Agnes marched to Padstow where they believed there was corn stored for export. (45) In the following month they returned in greater numbers:

> "... on Monday, the 6th instant, in the afternoon about five or six hundred of them, with several women and upwards of 100 horses, came into the town, and immediately began plundering, breaking open warehouses etc., and carrying away all the grain they could meet with; and tho' the Proclamation was read to them by the Civil Magistrate, it was all in vain, for they loaded all their horses, and what they could not carry off with them they either sold or gave away. After they had broken open the warehouses, they proceeded to the Key (sic), where there happened to be a sloop bound to Guiney, which they imagined had corn on board and

> several of them endeavoured to board her, but on firing some swivel guns, 'tho only with powder, they thought proper to desist; however for their satisfaction, the Captain suffered two to come on board to see there was no corn in the vessel. They stayed all night in the town hassaing and carousing, and the town was not quite clear of them until next morning."

A party of troops previously requested from the War Office arrived in the town two or three days after the riot. (46) The arrival of troops effectively put an end to the rioting, the Sheriff of the county recalling some years later:

> "I had three companies of soldiers sent under my command to be placed in such towns and places as I thought proper, which soon put an end to the tumults we had then in our County." (47)

Although in April it was reported that a formidible company of tinners several thousand strong had risen in the county, they appear to have dispersed without any further rioting. (48)

The year 1766 was marked by widespread rioting over England. The Annual Regist r reported in September:

> "There have been many riots and much mischief done in different parts of England, in consequence of the rising of the poor; who have been driven to desperation and madness, by the exhorbitant prices of all manner of provisions." (49)

It went on to list forty separate outbreaks, one of which was in Cornwall:

> "At Redruth and St. Austle (sic), the tinners have risen, and compelled the farmers and butchers to lower their prices." (50)

The outbreaks had taken place in August, and this time were centred not in the ports, but in the inland market towns of Truro and Redruth. These riots were in fact the earliest in which the fixing of prices rather than the prevention of grain exportation, was clearly the objective of the rioters.

> "... the tinners were once more at war with the farmers and at Truro, at Redruth, and elsewhere, they collected and clamoured loudly for a lowering of prices to the standard which they had unanimously adopted as just and fair." (51)

The events at these towns reveal that the rioters preserved a high degree of control and singleness of purpose:

> "Last Wednesday a party of tinners assembled at Truro, where the farmers insisted upon twenty-one and twenty-two shillings per Cornish bushel for wheat, and twelve shillings per bushel for barley, which is three Winchester bushels. By the prudence of the magistrates they were prevailed upon to be quiet; the corn was sold to them at the following prices viz. wheat at 14 shillings per bushel, and barley at seven shillings. On Friday they came to Redruth, where the farmers demanded the same prices as at Truro for their corn, sevenpence halfpenny a pound for their butter, and fourpence per gallon Winchester measure for their potatoes; but the tinners obliged them to sell the wheat and barley at the same price as at Truro." (52)

The Annual Register lists a single isolated incident near Truro in 1767, where tinners seized and paid for corn (53), but the next year of widespread rioting was 1773.

In that year rioting was widespread over the county. Disturbances appear to have begun at Padstow late in January. The Secretary of State received a letter describing events which took place in that port on the 24th of that month:

> "We had the devil and all of a riot at Padstow. Some of the people have run to too great lengths in exporting of corn, it being a great corn country. Seven or eight hundred tinners went thither, who first offered the cornfactors seventeen shillings for twenty four gallons of wheat; but being told they should have none, they immediately broke open the cellar doors, and took away all in the place without money or price. About sixteen or seventeen soldiers were called out to stop their progress, but the Cornishmen rushed forward and wrested the firelocks out of the soldiers hands: from thence they went to Wadebridge, where they found a great deal of corn cellared for exportation which they also took and carried away ..., We think 'tis but the beginning of a general insurrection, because as soon as the corn which they have taken away is expended, they will assemble in greater numbers armed, for 'tis an old saying, 'The belly has no ears'." (54)

The prediction that rioting would increase proved to be well founded, for on the 9th February, the justices of the county wrote to the Secretary at War:

> "Some time since a large body of tinners from the western part of the county assembled in a riotous manner at Padstow and Wadebridge ... we hoped they would have proceeded no further ... but on Saturday last they went to Ruan, and yesterday at Penryn, and took away what barley they could find in several Malt-houses, some part of which they sold at 1s. a Winchester bushel. They gave out that they design to proceed to other parts of this county, where the like violence will be committed." (55)

We possess further details of the riot at Penryn. The rioters came into town on the 8th February, but were contained by a detachment of Invalids from Pendennis Castle. These soldiers then took up quarters in the King's Arms Inn. In the middle of the night the tinners revisited the town and carried off a great quantity of corn. In the morning they reappeared and attacked the inn where the soldiers were quartered. The officer and two of his men were wounded, and firing in self defence killed two of the tinners and an innocent female bystander. (56) The attack on the inn turned out to be more than an outburst of unthinking violence. It was rather part of a strategic plan on the part of the tinners, for when the soldiers left the town in pursuit of the tinners who had attacked them, a second party of about three hundred tinners entered the town from the other side. The town now being defenceless, the Mayor was forced to come to terms and sell the corn at one third less than its cost price. (57)

The riots of 1773 were not confined to attempts to seise corn awaiting exportation at the ports. At the market town of Helston, the miners assembled and carried off a considerable quantity of corn, some of which they did not pay for, but some, "at a low price fixed by themselves." (58)

In the country districts around Truro and Tregony, bands of miners visited the farmers and seised quantities of corn which they found stored. "The peace of the county was never more disturbed in my time", wrote a magistrate from Tregony. The tinners broke open cellars and malthouses, roughly handling those who opposed them. They offered the corn which they seised, "at one shilling a sack of 16 gallons of barley, and sold it at the

same price to everybody that they could get to buy it of them." (59)

Troops from the Plymouth garrison were sent into the county, arriving on the 17th February, and being stationed at Penryn, Falmouth, Helston, and Redruth. (60) A further detachment which arrived on the 25th, had to be sent before the peace of the county was finally restored. (61)

Despite events across the Channel, 1789 was not marked by widespread food rioting in Cornwall. In August there were fears that the miners were about to rise. (62) The Mayor of Penryn requesting on the 3rd of that month, that a detachment of troops be sent to assist the civil power in the event of an outbreak. (63) It is likely that this detachment was sent in time, for there do not appear to have been any significant outbreaks. Nevertheless, there was constant and well founded apprehension that the situation was only just under control. The food situation was severe, a writer reported in September that he had lately returned from the mining parishes, where he had witnessed:

> "the greatest imaginable poverty and distress, insomuch that I have seen women gathering snails in order to make a broth for the support of their families."

It was, he conceeded, true that of late the tinners had been some hat riotous so that the gentlemen had been obliged to call in the aid of the military, but thought that considering the low price of tin and the high price of grain, "much might be said in favour of these poor industrious labourers." (64)

The years of the French Wars were marked in Cornwall, as elsewhere, by great distress. Several of these years were marked by widespread rioting, 1793, 1795, 1796, 1801 and 1812. These outbreaks were to some extent coloured by the popular radicalism of those years. Jacobinism probably coloured to a lesser extent the behaviour of the rioters, than did fear of jacobinism, the reaction of the authorities.

On the 6th February, 1793, the Times reported:

> "Several towns in Cornwall were last week visited by large bodies of miners from the different works,

> in search of concealed corn, which they insist is intended for exportation to France. At Wadebridge, they found about 25,000 bushels in store, which they obliged the owners to sell at reduced prices. At Looe upwards of 6,000 bushels of grain were stop by them from being shipped, but we do not hear of their committing any other outrage. Part of the first regiment of Dragoons is gone from Devonshire to assist the Magistrates in restoring peace." (65)

Among the inland parishes visited was Veryan. When debating the question of forming an armed association in that parish as a precaution against French invasion, the Rev. John Whitaker saw a further advantage which would accrue from the formation of such a body:

> "I earnestly pressed upon them the usefulness of doing so, in order to get arms down into the parish, and so be always prepared to give a warm reception to the tinners, who have been lately visiting us." (66)

The information that a quantity of corn was stored at Falmouth, lead to a further incident early in May. Between two or three hundred tinners entered the town were met by the Mayor and Corporation who demanded their business. The tinners replied that they had been told that there was a large quantity of corn and flour in the town which they expected to be sold to them at a reasonable price, "as they could get none from the farmers." The Mayor told them that since the corn and flour in question belonged to the government he could not very well do as they asked, but would write for authorisation to do so. He asked what price they would agree to give should the government agree to the sale. They agreed upon sixteen shillings a Winchester. The miners then retired in good order, with a determination expressed to, "visit the whole county, and to regulate the price of all kinds of provisions." (67) Reasonableness on both sides continued. The Mayor wrote as he had promised, and the town clerk visited the neighbouring mines, and conversed with the captains. He returned with considerable peace of mind:

> "there is little apprehension of another visit, yet some of the men informed me they expected Government's answer on Tuesday next —— the managers say should they again attempt to rise they will accompany them to see that no mischief is done."

There were no further incidents, so it is likely that the government agreed to the sale. The town was taking no chances however, and an additional fifty constables were sworn in just in case. (68)

> "A very great scarcity of grain prevailed this year over England and indeed all Europe." (69)

With this comment the Vicar of Wendron signed off his parish register for 1795. It was indeed a year of exceptional hardship for the poor in Cornwall as in the rest of Britain. (70)

On 6th January, the Duke of Portland wrote to the Mayor of Falmouth, disclosing his apprehensions that the miners might make some attempt to seize some government corn stored there, informing him that in the event of military assistance being required, the nearest commanding officers had been directed to pay immediate attention to any request which he might make. (71) The Mayor replied that there were no grounds for expecting trouble, and that the town was well prepared for it if there should be any. (72)

Disturbances began early in March. On the 10th about two hundred miners entered Penzance, believing that there was corn there intended for export. They succeeded in finding a small quantity of corn on board a vessel which as so intended. The Captain readily agreed to release the corn for sale, upon which assurance they were induced to depart.

About an hour later there came news that six hundred miners were in a "more tumultous manner", approaching the town from a different quarter. They were met by the Volunteers, and following the reading of the Riot Act, dispersed at bayonet point. They left with threats of returning the next day in greater numbers. The Captain of the Volunteers had little doubt that they would do so, and as they promised, put a price on articles of provision. He was however, confident that they would again be repulsed. (73)

At 10 a.m., on the following day, it was reported that about two hundred miners had assembled about six miles north of the town. The Volunteers with two small cannons, and accompanied by the magistrates, went out to meet them,

and the miners seeing the force opposed to them thought it prudent to retire. (74)

On the 25th March, the Mayor of Penzance, sent further details of the disturbances to the Secretary of State:

> "The first party of miners which appeared had absolutely entered the town, before their intention was known, and before any check could be given them, and they proceeded notwithstanding the remonstance of the Justice of the Peace of the town ... and many others of the inhabitants, in a very tumultous manner to the quay or pier, and insisted on searching vessels for corn, and obliged the crew of one of them to land a very small quantity found on board her. They also broached several casks containing oil under the pretence that such casks were filled with corn —— The reasons they alleged for their conduct were, that a sufficient quantity of corn was not in the county to support the inhabitants until harvest and they were determined none should be shipped off. ... The second party was evidently called together at the instance of the first, was considerably more numerous and riotously disposed, and insisted on entering the town in a body of several thousands against the authority of the magistrate, and in defiance of the Volunteer Company, openly declaring that they did not come about corn only but to settle the price of many other commodities such as butter and other shop goods ... They at last retreated but with many threats of returning with arms and in greater numbers." (75)

The miners involved came from the villages around St. Just. They also visited the nearby market town of Helston, where a party of them attended on the magistrate and informed him that if corn were not procured for them on certain terms, they would return in force and armed and secure those terms for themselves. (76)

Other areas of the county were similarly affected. Penryn was intended for a visit which did not come off, and in the last week of March the miners of the mid-Cornwall region, finding no corn brought to market, went into the rural parish of Ruan Langhorne, where corn was stored which they believed to be intended for export. They broke open a granary and seized corn which was the property of a merchant who had previously sold them bad grain. (77)

Their original intention had then been to proceed to Penryn, but thinking that town was too well prepared for them, they went instead to Padstow. There the miners, chiefly from the St. Agnes area, (78) removed forty bushels of wheat from a cellar to which nobody would own (79) and then dispersed.

Quarrymen from the Dennibole slate quarries, many of whom had previously been miners, visited Port Issac, and took as much barley as they wanted, but paid the owner eleven shillings a bushel, telling him that if he offered to ship the remainder, they would come and take it without payment. (79) On the 19th April Falmouth was fearing an attack which did not materialize. (80)

Troops were quickly sent to the county, and by the 23rd March a company of the Worcestershire Militia had been sent to Penzance, and a second company to Helston. (81) Sir Francis Basset was assured on the 6th April that it was not intended to withdraw them from the county, until they were relieved by other troops. (82)

The troops succeeded in restoring order, but the food crisis was far from over. The Secretary of State wrote to Sir Francis Basset in July, expressing his surprise to hear that the distress still prevailed. (83) Throughout the summer months requests for corn supplies continued to reach the Privy Council. On the 24th June it was reported from Helston that every grain of barley had been given out, and numbers of the poor had had to be sent away without, many of whom it was feared would perish through absolute hunger. (84) Emergency supplies were sent to Falmouth, and these with the presence in the county of the Worcestershire Militia, enabled the authorities to control the situation. Further outbreaks continued to be feared, and as late as November a general warning was sent out to the Cornish justices that more rioting could be expected. (85)

So bad was the grain crisis, that even after the harvest of 1796, food prices were still high. As close to the harvest as October, a Helston lawyer noted in his diary:

"The high price of the necessaries of life at
this season of the year is truely alarming." (86)

The Worcestershire Militia had remained in the county, but by the spring distress had become so bad that even their presence was not enough to preserve order. On 6th April, a crowd of miners numbering about a thousand, entered Truro in a mood of desperation, saying that they would rather be imprisoned than starved. Meeting the Worcestershire Militia, they threw stones and rushed upon them. (87) The rioters were soon subdued by the firing of case shot, and several of their number were taken prisoner. (88)

The most serious of the riots of 1796, took place in the vicinity of Helston. On 6th April the miners of Sithney assembled at their Churchtown, insisted on having barley at ten shillings and sixpence and wheat at twenty-one shillings per bushel, and compelled the farmers to sell it to them at those prices. (89)

On the following day they again assembled and visited the farmers to lower the price of provisions. (90) On the 8th and 9th, the miners from the neighbouring parishes of Germoe and Breage joined in, and two farmers who refused to agree to the prices, had a rope placed around their necks, but were cut down before they expired. (91) On the 11th the Worcestershire Militia marched to Helston and restored order, several of the ringleaders were arrested. (92)

By 26th April it was reported from Truro that the miners were perfectly quiet, and that the price of corn was falling. (93) Similarly reassuring news was received from Redruth on the 28th. (94) A disturbance at Looe in this year seems not to have been the work of miners, but of the lower orders of the townspeople. (95)

The next year of widespread rioting was 1801, a year of scarcity following another bad year in 1800. The Vicar of Wendron concluding his entry for 1801:

> "A very great scarcity of grain prevailed in this and the preceeding year. The distresses of the poor were very great."* (96)

1800 was the year of William Lovett's birth in the west Cornish village of Newlyn, and he remembered his mother telling him, that so scarce and dear was corn of all kinds that, "she could not get bread enough to satisfy her hunger, although she travelled many miles around about to seek to purchase it." (97)

There were little reserves to carry the poor through a second bad year in a row, and rioting must have seemed inevitable to the Cornish gentry. One can imagine their consternation when in the beginning of March, widespread food rioting broke out across the border in Devon. These disturbances extended to Launceston, just inside the county, where about two-hundred women seised corn from a farmer who was attempting to sell it to a factor, put him to flight and sold the corn at 10s. a Winchester. (98)

Launceston was remote from the mining districts, and this incident did not precipitate any disturbances in the west. In the beginning of April, however, the trouble in the mining districts began. At Falmouth women in the market place insisted on having potatoes at a reduced price. On being refused, they proceeded to help themselves, but order was soon restored by the magistrates. (99) Tinners from Gwennap broke into Redruth market on the 10th, and forced the sellers to reduce the prices of all kinds of provisions. (100) They were eventually dispersed by the Illogan Volunteers. (101)

Throughout the middle weeks of April, rioting generally prevailed in the mining districts. Scarcely a town escaping from the demonstrations of the miners in the market. Large bodies of miners in the vicinity of St. Austell visited the farmers with a rope in one hand and a contract in the other. The contract contained a declaration that they would reduce the prices of their

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*In 1801 Wheat reached £3 3s. Od. a Cornish Bushel, Barley £2 2s. Od. and Potatoes £1 1s. Od.
In 1802 the equivalent prices were £1 1s. Od., 10s. 6d., and 4s. 6d.
(Marginal Information in Wendron Parish Register).

corn. At Helston a troop of the Volunteer Cavalry only preserved order with some difficulty. At Penzance, two men from nearby Newlyn waited on the Mayor to request his permission for the people of the district to come in and reduce the prices. Not unnaturally permission was refused, but a large body of rioters entered on their own authority, order being preserved by the presence of the military. (102)

On the 25th April, it was reported that prices were rapidly falling, and relief was expected from several thousand barrels of flour daily expected at Falmouth. On that day, however a further incident took place at St. Ives, where faced with the threat of the rope, butchers were induced to lower their prices. (103)

By the end of the month, the disturbances were over. The harvest to come was to be a good one. In fact prices which had risen to 3 guineas a Cornish bushel for wheat and 1 guinea for barley in 1801, did not in 1802 rise above 1 guinea for wheat and 10s. 6d. for barley. (104)

1812 saw food riots in several English towns. In Cornwall rioting was widespread. Both the corn and potato harvests of 1811 had been deficient, and the complaints of the poor of the mining districts were not only of high prices, but also of the "actual want occasionally of corn for the money." (105)

The first disturbance was perpetrated by the tin streamers of the Bodmin district (106) who in the last week of March proceeded to Padstow in search of corn, "for they could procure none in their own neighbourhood for money." Allowed by the magistrates to search the warehouses, they found no corn, and were persuaded to return home. (107) Throughout the day their conduct was orderly and peaceful, and no violence was committed. (108)

Further west in the mining districts, the food crisis was severe indeed. The West Briton claimed that it had good authority for stating that there were at that moment numbers in the county who were "literally famishing." (109) The expected trouble was not long in coming. On 6th April the miners from the parishes west of Truro, notably Kenwyn (110), assembled in large numbers and

visited several farms, taking with them as in 1796 and in 1801, a rope and written contract, binding the farmers to supply them with grain at 30s. the Cornish bushel for wheat and 15s. for barley. Where the contract was signed, they offered no violence, but contented themselves with soliciting a little bread; "an article of food which some of them declared they had not tasted for several days." Where they met with refusals to sign, threats were uttered, but none apparently carried out. A local militia regiment was called out. News reached Truro that a party of miners were at the farm of a Mr. Vincent, two miles from the city, where they believed there to be a quantity of unthreshed corn. The miners surrounded the farmhouse, and finding Vincent was absent, sent messengers to seek him at Truro, and induce him to sell them the corn at the price which they had decreed as a maximum. When found, Vincent signed the agreement, and promised to put it into effect. (111)

In the Redruth district a total stop was put to mining activities, when the miners left work to go in search of corn. (112)

On the day following the disturbances in the Truro district, the county justices meeting for the Quarter Sessions, were informed by the proprietor of the Redruth Brewery, that the miners had taken possession of it, to obtain such stocks of malting barley as they might find there. An order for the Monmouth and Brecon Militia, stationed at Pendennis Castle, to proceed to Redruth, was received at Falmouth at 7 p.m., that evening, and they immediately set out for Redruth, where the miners, though assembled in large numbers, had as yet done no mischief. On the arrival of the Militia, they were induced to return to their homes.

On the next day, several parties of miners again visited farmers, forcing sales at regulated prices and a miller at Kenwyn was threatened with violence. Order was restored by the Militia. (113)

The following week, the West Briton was claiming that tranquillity was completely restored in the mining districts. The magistrates and gentry were making efforts to secure a supply of imported grain, and cargoes were expected

at several of the ports. (114)

An isolated incident of food rioting occurred during 1818. Penzance was the scene of the disturbance which happened in the Autumn. A large crowd of men, women, and children prevented a supply of potatoes from being exported. Export of this commodity had been going on for some time, with the effect that the local price had risen from 5s. to between 7 and 9s. a Cornish bushel. The riot was stopped by the Mayor, who first tried to quieten the crowd by addressing them at great length on the advantages of a free trade in provisions, but finding little success with this method, he threatened them with the Riot Act and committal to Bodmin gaol to await trial for a capital offence. The crowd retired and the shipment of potatoes was resumed. (115)

There were further outbreaks in 1830 and 1831. Neither was a year of exceptionally severe shortage. Indeed Cornwall may have been the only county to experience food rioting. (116) Both were years of widespread rioting of other types over England. The agricultural labourers riots were at their height, an isolated incident revealing that the fringes of this rising just reached into Cornwall. Perhaps the food riots might be regarded as incidents related to these disturbed times, for there is no indication in the press, that a food crisis on the scale of 1795, 1801 or 1812 prevailed in the county, although the price of wheat was certainly higher than it had been for some time. The harvest of 1830 had been a good one. (117)

In November 1830 the miners visited Mevagissey to prevent an exportation of grain. Some sacks were cut, and one person injured in the struggle. The following week miners from the St. Austell district assembled with the intention of preventing grain exportation from Fowey. They were met by some of the neighbouring gentry, who reasoned with them on the "gross impropriety and wickedness of their conduct", and prevailed upon them to return to their work. (118)

Rioting in 1831 was more widespread. Trouble began early in February, when 300 miners from St. Just marched to Penzance to prevent an export of

barley. They returned peacefully to their homes once they had been promised by the shippers that the barley would not be exported. (119) Towards the end of the month a party of miners from the parishes of Breage, Germoe, Gwinnear, Wendron and Crowan passed through Helston in perfect order under eight chosen leaders. Their purpose was the prevention of further exportation of grain from the Gweek River. Throughout the day they were accompanied by several of the neighbouring gentlemen who had met up with them. Several stores of grain were discovered, from the owners of which they received assurances that it would be sent to the local markets. Perfect order was preserved through the day at the end of which they returned peacefully to their homes. Before they dispersed they joined "one and all" in a protest against the beershops, which they claimed had raised the price of barley. (120)

Within a week the local press was reporting that all the miners in all parts of the county had quietly returned to their work, and peaceful and orderly conduct prevailed. (121) Soldiers sent from Plymouth were not immediately required. Their services were, however, made use of a few days later, when a party of miners from Penhale Mine, opposed a shipment of grain from Newquay. Special constables were sworn in, and after the Riot Act had been read, the miners retired, threatening to return the next day. About thirty of them did so, but the arrival of the military prevented any further disturbance. (122)

The riots of 1847 were by far the most serious and widespread since the war years. The grain shortage was intensified by the disease caused failure of the potato crop in 1846. The following table gives an indication of the distress by comparing the prices of vital commodities at St. Austell market for May 1846 with those for May 1847:

	1846	1847	
Wheat	8s. 1½d.	13s.	per Imperial bushel
Barley	3s. 8¼d.	7s. 6d.	per Imperial bushel (123)

The price rise was, moreover, an abrupt one. Corn prices had been steadily increasing week by week, when suddenly in the beginning of May 1847 they rose to famine level. On the 10th May the factors were demanding 20s. a quarter over the price of the previous week, and succeeded in establishing a rise of ten shillings. The pressure was intensified by the non-availability of the potato substitute, a late spring was holding back the vegetable crop, and stormy weather was handicapping the fishing industry.

In this second week of May, the china clay workers of St. Austell had marched to Padstow and Wadebridge to prevent grain shipments, but had failed to persuade the miners from that district to join with them. The miners' reluctance did not long survive the steep increase in prices. Two days afterwards a large body of them from St. Austell, Luxulian, and Roche, proceeded to Wadebridge, declaring their intention to "have corn at their own prices." An attack was made on some warehouses, and their doors broken in. Persons attempting to stop the miners were roughly handled. A hundred special constables were sworn in, and kept themselves in readiness in the towns Reading Room. Towards evening, the miners sent word that if the magistrate would pledge that the stored corn would not be shipped, they would disperse. The magistrate did not feel that he could make any such pledge, but the miners nevertheless left the town. (124)

They did not return, and it was hoped that the trouble was now over. On the following morning, however, three or four hundred quarrymen from Delabole, entered the town, and surrounding the corn stores, insisted on being supplied at their own price. They were assured that no corn was being sent out of the neighbourhood. All the bread which could be purchased was distributed among them, and they were all set to leave the town, when a large body of miners came in. They did no mischief, contenting themselves with parading up and down the streets behind two leaders, one of whom carried a pasty on a pole, and the other a red flag. They threatened violence if their demands for corn were not met with, but the store was protected by fully armed

men from the coast guard, and no violence took place, the miners departing at nightfall. (125)

In the same week two hundred miners entered Callington market and compelled the farmers to reduce their prices. They searched the public houses for loaded farm carts, and such corn as they discovered they took into the market and sold, returning the money thus obtained to the farmers. (126)

Further west trouble was feared as early as January, (127) but there were no outbreaks until the 22nd May, when a man buying up corn at Helston market was driven out by women. (128) Rumours of an imminent attack on Penzance lead to sixty men of the 5th Fusiliers from Pendennis being sent there on the 26th. They were supplemented by members of the coast guard and two hundred special constables. These forces were stationed in the Market House. All the town's shops were closed, the inns shut, and the market locked. On the 27th three thousand miners came in, and used their weight of numbers to force the magistrates to agree to supply them with grain at reduced prices. There was no violence except that the old work-house was broken into, it being suspected, wrongly, that grain was hidden there. (29)

On the 29th May, there was once again trouble at Helston market, where the miners took control and forced the farmers to sell considerably below the current price. (130)

At Redruth disturbances began on the Market day of the 4th June. Trouble began at Pool, about two miles from the town, where a flour warehouse was pillaged. The owner of the warehouse spoke to the crowd from an upstairs window, telling him that he could not lower his prices to the level which they demanded. (131) The magistrates arrived from Redruth with the military, and after the Riot Act was read, the crowd dispersed. (132) They reassembled in Redruth market, where they forced the butchers to sell at reduced prices. The magistrates then addressed them from the balcony of an hotel, and proposed that a deputation be sent in to talk with them. The resulting conference proved fruitless. (133) Word then came that a mob was attacking a flour store in

another part of the town. Three of the magistrates went there with a party of unarmed constables, but were stoned by the mob. The military were hurriedly sent for. At the time the announcement that they were on their way was made, there were two or three hundred persons in the store carrying off flour, but by the time the military arrived they had all disappeared, "some escaping over walls and houses which at any other time would have been thought perfectly impracticable." (134) The mob eventually agreed to disperse, provided that prisoners who had been taken during the day were released. To this the magistrates agreed, and by 10 o'clock the town was quiet.

The following day was market day at Camborne, only three miles distant, but apart from the miners insisting in the morning that vegetables should be sold direct to the public, and not to retailers, the day passed without incident. At Helston on the same day, despite the presence of soldiers, farmers were forced to sell corn at reduced prices, but there was no serious trouble. (135)

At St. Austell in the following week, there was a serious outbreak. A large body of miners entered the town about mid-day, and, after breaking into some bread shops, they were making for the corn stores, when they were met by the magistrates. The miners agreed to send a deputation to consult with the authorities. (136) Reassured perhaps by the presence of the military in the town, the magistrates took a somewhat high-handed attitude with the deputation, telling them that it was impossible to lower corn prices, and further that they, "ought to be much obliged to the persons who would bring grain into this neighbourhood at any price."

The crowd surrounded the Town Hall, and after a while the Riot Act was read, and the soldiers ordered to load their guns. At the end of the statutary hour, the soldiers were marched into the street and the crowd fell back. The streets were cleared at bayonet point, and several of the ringleaders seized. There was no resistance, and by 10 o'clock, all was quiet. (137)

This was the final disturbance of 1847. At the next Assize, of sixteen men indicted for riot, six were acquitted, whilst the others received sentences of from six months to two years hard labour. (138)

The Food Riot: Patterns of Behaviour

The above account strongly suggests that in Cornwall as elsewhere, far from being the irrational and spontaneous response of a disorganized rabble, flying vainly in the face of an invincible political economy, the food riot in general followed accepted patterns of action, and was conducted with definite objectives in view. If the intended good order and discipline was not always maintained, —— action not always being confined strictly to the avowed purpose, so that a *degeneration into violence and plunder could result* —— it is the rarity of such departures which is striking.

The evidence suggests that the *food riots of the first half of the* eighteenth century were more violent in their nature, and contained a larger element of looting than subsequent outbreaks. This is hardly surprising: the formalised tradition of the food riot in some of its almost ritual forms, was not born at once. (It has been mentioned above that the price-fixing riot did not reach Cornwall until 1766). After the mid-eighteenth century violence and looting cease to be characteristic of the majority of outbreaks. Prescribed action forms take over. It should be remembered that the authorities were unfamiliar with the phenomenon of food rioting in the early outbreaks, and thus the descriptions which they hurriedly rushed to the Secretary of State contain a far stronger element of panic and fear than do later descriptions. It is also possible that the less violent nature of later protests had something to do with the moderating influence of Wesleyan Methodism, the growth of which was rapid in the mining districts, after Wesley's early visits in the 1740's. It is perhaps the most satisfactory explanation, however, to say that the sophistication of the form of protest adopted grew with the experience of food rioting.

It would be wrong to assume that even the early outbreaks bore little relationship to the poor's concept of a moral economy operating through a regulated grain trade. The miners who threatened to visit Falmouth in 1727, stated they only intended to come, if at the next market, "there did not come in a sufficient quantity of corn to supply their occasions." (above p.[127]) The threat related to a young witness that if opposed, "they would make the town run with blood and destroy everybody they met," should surely be regarded as the use of colourful language to an impressionable youth rather than a threat which was ever seriously intended to be executed.

The early riots were directed against the exportation of corn, and although corn stored for shipping, was seized and removed without payment, there is little evidence to suggest indiscriminate plundering. It was most often a particular merchant who was the clear target of the tinners' action.*

A letter of warning to John Pye a Falmouth merchant, reveals that the tinners knew very well against whom their action should be directed and why:

> "I am told you have bought up a large quantity of corn lately, which has been the means of raising the price of corn to such a degree, as to incense the tinners so much against you and your family that I am credibly informed no less than a thousand of them will be with you tomorrow early." (139)

A witness's account of the action against Guide in 1737 indicates that even though his cellars were looted, there was a section of the crowd which favoured a more moderate course of action. The tinners had gone first to Guide's house and questioned him as to whether he had any corn in his cellars. He told them that he had only fifty bushels, and had no intention of storing any more. Guide offered to sell them the corn at cost price. Some of the miners wanted to agree to this, but others insisted they, "would have it for nothing." The crowd forced Guide to open his cellar in which the grain was stored, but were still clearly not of one mind as to whether the corn should be seized or not.

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*For example, John Pye at Falmouth in 1737, (above p.[130]) Guide at Penryn in the same year (above p.[131]), and Benjamin Heame at Penryn in 1748 (above p.[131]).

Just as before a section of the crowd had wanted to pay for the corn, so now the moderates said that if the corn did not exceed the fifty bushels which Guide claimed was all he had, then none of it should be touched. Moderate opinion lost out, and once the doors were opened, the crowd rushed in and seized the corn, knocking down those who tried to prevent them. (140)

Corn looted at Padstow in 1773 was only taken after the miners had offered to pay the cornfactors seventeen shillings the Cornish bushel for wheat, but were told that they could have none (above p. 135). On other occasions in 1773 corn seized was being offered by the rioters at a shilling a sack which would seem to have been a symbolic protest price (above p. 136).

By and large after the mid-century, the food riot followed more defined forms of action, directed to the points where the idea of the regulated corn supply was clearly breaking down. Even in the most disorderly of protests, some notion of legitimacy usually underlay the protest. To the rioters those farmers and factors who saw no reason to exclude the food supply of the poor from the rule of the laws of supply and demand were the offenders. Against such people the rioters felt that their action was both legitimate and justified.

The We t Briton reminded the poor in 1812:

> "The price of every commodity will naturally be regulated by the demand and supply, —— grain will be cheap when it is plenty and dear when it is scarce; and all attempts to alter this fixed and natural relation, whether they proceed from the rulers or the multitude, must inevitably produce and increase the very evils which they are intended to remedy." (141)

Such lectures in the principles of laissez-faire were frequently addressed to the poor, but they remained obstinate in their belief that there was a "just" price for bread corn, and that that just price could only prevail if a stop were put to the activities of corn-jobbers, monopolisers, forestallers, regrators, exporters, and all others who had an interest in rising corn prices.

The claim that food riots were frequently well organized and disciplined needs to be substantiated. It is worth quoting at length from an account which the Annual Register published in 1831 under the heading of "Riot", since it testifies to the marked degree of control under which such protests could be executed:

> "... a party of 3,000 miners ... passed through Helston in the greatest order, (having selected eight men to act as leaders), for the avowed purpose of preventing further shipments of grain from Gweek River. Near Mawgan, they were accidentally met by Mr. Grylls, who entreated them to return, but to this they would not consent. They said, 'If you, Sir, and Mr. Silvester (who had come from Helston) will go with us, we will engage to do no mischief.' Finding that all intreaties to induce them to return were unavailing, Mr. Grylls, Rev. Mr. Black, and Mr. Silvester accompanied them to Geer, where about 100 Cornish bushels of barley were deposited, which Mr. Grylls promised should be sent to Helston market. They then proceeded to Treath, near Helford, where only a small quantity was found, and there also a promise was given that it should be brought to market. From Treath the party went to Gilling, and in the cellars belonging to Mr. Roskruge found about 200 bushels of barley, 50 bushels of malt, and 50 of wheat. Three of the leaders entered the cellars and measuring the depth, length and breadth of each pile of grain, computed the quantity, and having obtained a promise ... that all the barley should not be exported; and the wheat should be sent to market, they appeared satisfied and set out on their return home.
>
> Near Mawgan Mr. Grylls addressed the party and advised them to return peaceably to their homes. This they promised to do, and gave three cheers. About five o'clock, Mr. Silvester gave them good advice on Helston Downs, when after three cheers they entered the town in good order, some hundreds retiring to their homes, and before eight o'clock scarcely a miner was to be seen. Throughout the day the utmost regularity prevailed; all that the men required being that the corn should be brought to market for which they alleged they could not afford to pay more than 12s. per bushel." (142)

This was a clear case of a very large crowd exercising a considerable degree of controlled action, with discipline being preserved over a considerable milage and a not-inconsiderable space of time.

On the following day, the good order and self-control of the inhabitants of the mining districts was once again evident:

> "as some corn was being carried through Breage to Penzance, a great number of persons, principally female, supposing it was going to Mr. Branwell's for exportation stopped and unloaded the carriages. When they found it was for Mr. Stevens a miller of Penzance, for the consumption of that neighbourhood, they immediately had it carefully housed 'till Monday last, when Mr. Stevens sent his carriages again to fetch it."

Mr. Stevens was not without a sense of humour, for on finding his corn secure and "not a grain diminished", he treated the women with two bottles of brandy for taking such care of it. (143)

On another occasion than 1831, the miners invited a responsible person to accompany their demonstration, probably to emphasise the legitimacy of their purpose. In 1729, tinners from St. Austell visiting the port of Parr, took with them a parish constable named Rosevear. He, however, became so captured by the spirit of the occasion, that when the tinners' request that stored corn be delivered to them was turned down, he took the lead in breaking down the doors of a cellar. Being recognised he was subsequently arrested, tried and executed as a ringleader. (144) His body was hung in chains on St. Austell Downs as a warning to all miners who might be tempted to let their hunger and indignation over-rule their reason. (145)

Well ordered conduct was characteristic of many years of food rioting. In 1801 the miners entering Liskeard were met by the Mayor, who declared to them, "his determination to act the part and duty of a magistrate", the miners respectfully answered, "So you ought." (146)

In 1812 a party of young miners who entered Truro, were so well behaved that the West Briton thought it had to do them the justice of saying that it:

> "... could not have conceived so many of them would quit their work under such circumstances, and show less of irritation or do so little mischief." (147)

The outstanding example of a strict confinement of action to the avowed purpose, and of disciplined control was in 1767:

> "A body of tinners assembled near Truro in Cornwall, and rummaged Lambessa Farm for corn, which they seized and paid for; but in searching for the corn, one of their company filched a couple of silver spoons, which were soon missed, and application made to the ringleader to have them returned, these men with a frankness not to be expected, insisted on an immediate search of all their companions, in order to discover the thief, who being soon detected, they caused him to be stript and scourged to such a degree that he took to his bed, and it was thought would hardly recover." (148)

I have discovered no instance of any person being killed by food rioters in Cornwall, though in at least two years, 1729 and 1748, rioters were shot. Violence of course occurred, bones were perhaps broken, as in 1773, when the War Office was informed that the tinners, "knocked down and beat everybody that opposed them, some of our people had their bones broken." (149) Property was much more likely to suffer than life or limb, violence being more often threatened than used.

In the frequently resorted to form of the rope and contract, the rope represented a symbolic threat. It is true that the threat symbolised was that of immediate execution. The tinners visited the farmers with a rope in one hand and a written contract that the farmer would bring his corn to market and sell it at an agreed price in the other. In 1801 it was reported:

> "large bodies of tinners from the district around St. Austell, visited the farmers, ... carrying a written paper in one hand, and a rope in the other. If the farmer hesitated to sign this paper (which contained a declaration that they should sell their corn, etc., at a reduced price) the rope was fastened about their necks and they were terrified and tortured into compliance." (150)

This form of rope and contract was used in 1796 and in 1812 as well as in 1801, and it may well have been the method used in earlier years when contemporary accounts simply record that farmers were threatened without going into detail. On only one occasion did matters go beyond threatening (above p. 142). This was in 1796 and the two farmers suspended by the rioters were very quickly cut down again. (151)

It is possible to feel that one is describing a game, although a far from frivolous one, with clearly defined rules of which both sides were aware. Many farmers willingly sent their corn to market when a visit from the tinners brought home to them the depth of the distress from which the tinners were suffering due to lack of corn in the markets. Others guilty of intentionally withholding grain, must have expected that a visit from the tinners was one of the risks of business, just as they risked that prospects of a good harvest to come would lower the value of any stored grain as the scarcity continued into the summer months. In any case since the magistrates inevitably declared such contracts as null and void, farmers need have had little fear in signing them. (152)

For their part, the miners can have had few illusions about the strength of the contracts, but their protest served to throw their complaints and distresses fully into the public eye, and to point out to public anger, those farmers who were attempting to profit from the increasing distress. Such men were frequently decried in the local press, and subjected to strong moral pressures from their landlords and the magistrates to bring their corn to market if only in the interests of public order.

The Size, Composition, and Formation of the Crowd

Numerically speaking the Cornish crowd tended to be very formidable indeed. The following is a list in tabulated form of the instances from the evidence where the size of the crowd is estimated other than by the use of quantitive adjectives, such as "very large", "humerous", "immense", etc.

300	Penzance	- 1831
400	Padstow	- 1795
500	Penryn	- 1795
7-800	Padstow	- 1773
2,000	Manaccan	- 1831
2,000	Falmouth	- 1727
3,000	Truro	- 1796.

Crowds at Penzance in 1795 and at St. Austell and Redruth in 1757 were described as being, "several thousands" strong. It is small wonder that in the

absense of superior armed troops, the townspeople could offer little resistance to such large groups of rioters.

As such large numbers would suggest, the crowds were neither formed from single mines or from single parishes. The crowd cut across parish distinctions. Although in normal times, the miner was very conscious of his parish identity, in food rioting such distinctions were clearly set aside, and the issue became one of the miners as a body against common oppressors.

The Royal Proclamation of 1729, listed eighteen wanted rioters who came from four parishes. (153) Affidavits against nine miners sent to the Duke of Newcastle in 1773 show them to have come from four parishes. (154) Five rioters taken at Penryn in 1748 also represented four parishes. (155) The St. Just miners before they visited Penzance in 1795, sent circular letters to the miners of six different parishes inviting them to join them in preventing grain exportation. (156) The rioters of 1831 came from at least five parishes. (157)

In the only instance where miners are identified as coming from named mines instead of parishes, (1831) six mines are listed. (158) Since men from different parishes would be often working together, it could well have been at the mines where communication between the parishes was established. Whatever the means of communication, a point of assembly was usually agreed upon, for example, Chacewater in 1737, Church Town St. Just in 1795, and Sithney Common in 1831.

Within the parish, handbills were sometimes posted to advertise an intended demonstration. At St. Just in 1795, the following notice was posted in a blacksmith's shop:

> "This is to give notice that all persons coming to this shop and all other shops in this parish to attend at Church Town Saturday 14 instant. All that have got firelocks are to bring them with them for there we do intend to muster and be independent ourselves and them that have not any firelocks to provide themselves with staffs 9 feet long fix spears in the end of the same and them that refuse to their peril be it.
>
> So one and all —— So one and all." (159)

An old miner reminiscencing in 1898, recollected seeing as a boy, notices which had been posted at Padstow, calling upon fathers of starving children, "in the name of God and the King", to prevent vessels laden with corn from leaving that port, and to forcibly take their cargoes for their own use. (160)

The following handwritten notice, very specific and to the point, was posted at Stratton in 1801, (it is somewhat unusual in that Stratton as a non-mining parish was not a frequent scene of food rioting):

> "To all the labouring men and tradesmen in the hundred of Stratton that are willing to save their wives and children from the dreadful condition of being starved to death by the unfeeling and griping farmer.
>
> My fellow sufferers and country men now is the time to exert yourselves and shew yourselves men and true born Englishmen not to be enslaved by any nation or power of men on Earth; now is the time to come forward and take vengeance on your oppressors. Assemble all emeadiately (sic) and march in dreadful array to the habitations of the Griping Farmer, and compell them to sell their corn in the market, at a fair and reasonable price and if any refuse and will not comply with our just demands, we must make them feel the punishment due to their oppression and exortation. Therefore you are desired to meet at Stratton next Monday by 2 of the clock in the afternoon and march one and all with determined hearts and hands to have redress or vengence ----
>
> Cato" (161)

Although a few attempts were made by local justices and the Tory press (represented in Cornwall by the Cornwall Gazette) to ascribe the riots to the agitating tactics of a few disaffected, they were unconvincing, if only because they were an attempt to attribute particular and specific causes to a form of demonstration which remained substantially unchanged for over a century. In general the food riots had the moral support of the whole community, and the active participation of a substantial part. Rewards offered for the detection of the distributors of the handbills, and for information leading to the arrest of ringleaders were rarely effective. A Penzance magistrate, making excuses in 1795 for his inability to apprehend any of the rioters, explained:

> "Almost every individual in the mining parts of the Country where the riots happened, was more or less concerned in them, so that each man feels it his own cause."

He believed that the rioters could only be taken at night, since at other times, they found, "so safe and ready an asylum in the mines." (162)

The men of the mining districts were expected to join in. A Penryn magistrate in 1795, received information from his wife's maid, who had three brothers and a father among the miners, that though her relatives "are very adverse to the manner yet they shall be forced to join, (but that they shall run off as soon as they can)." (163) The reluctance of her family to take part in the riot is understandable in view of the fact that their names were known to a magistrate, and can hardly be said to imply any strong disapproval on their part of the conduct of their comrades.

The food riot was by and large the expression of the feelings of the mining community as a whole, and the very real sense in which the miners constituted a community apart, enabled their incursions to be regarded with real horror, even by the poorer tradesmen of the towns which they visited, and by the agricultural labourers of the farming areas. James Silk Buckingham describes in his autobiography a visit from the miners from the point of view of the inhabitants of a small non-mining village:

> "A body of some three or four hundred of these men visited Flushing, and as they were all dressed in the mud-stained frocks trousers in which they worked underground, and all armed with large clubs and sticks of various kinds, and speaking an uncouth jargon, which none but themselves could understand, they struck terror wherever they went, and seemed like an irruption of barbarians invading some more civilized country than their own." (164)

A letter to the Duke of Newcastle from Penryn in 1737, enclosing affidavits against a few rioters, explained that more could not be obtained because, "the tinners have seldom occasion to go abroad from their parishes where they live, or places where they work, therefore are known to but a few ..." (165)

The tinners collected in the mining villages and entered the market towns, or they made incursions into the agricultural districts, going "up among the farmers", as an old miner termed it, (166) or they proceeded in force to the ports to prevent exportation. In each case they were taking the

action outside of their own communities. The conflict was therefore not simply one of poor against rich.

Inhabitants of the non-mining districts frequently used the term "invasion" to describe the incursions of the miners. John Allen, the historian of Liskeard, well remembered from his boyhood, reports that, "The French are coming!" and "The tinners are rising", causing equal consternation among the towns inhabitants. (167)

When the townspeople of Looe received warning of an intended visit from the miners in 1793, the Sheriff of the County, who happened to be there, determined to resist force with force, and issued warrants for raising the Posse Comitatus, "which brought here from the neighbouring parishes, a great number of men, most of the inhabitants of the town also came forward, and all was bustle and preparation expecting hourly the arrival of the enemy."(168)

To identify leaders of the riots is extremely difficult. The fact that a rioter was taken and prosecuted, is far from offering proof of anything other than his involvement. It need only imply that he was known to eye witnesses and could thus be disclosed to the authorities. Alternatively those taken, far from having the self-possessed qualities of disciplined leadership, might well have been the hot-heads who were sufficiently carried away by the excitement of the occasion to have taken the lead in destroying property or assaulting townspeople. The one rioter who was executed following the disturbances of 1795 was nicknamed "Wildcat." (169)

The impression gained from reading the examinations of witnesses of the Penryn riots of 1748, is rather one of surprise on their part that the persons whom they identified should have become involved in such outrages:

> "And the said Thomas Hodge saith ... (he) overtook one Richard Remploy of the Parish of Gwennap tinner ... which said Richard Remploy was driving an horse before him with two sacks upon the back of the said horse which ... were ... full of corn ... the said Richard Remploy turned around upon this Depont. and asked him what he wanted, to which ... (he) answered how could you be so Roguish as to take away Gentlemen's corn ..."

Other witnesses also recognised a person whom they were surprised to see involved in the disturbance:

> "These examinants knowing the said John Davy ... called to him by name twice and at the second call the said Davy turned his face towards them as if he had heard the call. Whereupon the Examinant Hood spoke to him and told him, it was a great shame for him to be there upon such an occasion, or words to that effect, to which the said Davy made no reply ..." (170)

At St. Austell during the riots of 1847, among those arrested was an old man, to whom the magistrate spoke disapprovingly:

> "My good old man, what business can you have here, you show a very bad example, do go home, this is coming to a very serious matter." (171)

Sometimes individual leaders do stand out. The riots at Penzance in 1801 were headed by two fishermen of Newlyn, John and William Richards, although the bulk of the crowd was composed of miners. These two brothers were described in the press report of the incident as, "notorious for their turbulent dispositions." (172) Such a description of notoriety applied at this time to a Cornish fisherman, is perhaps suggestive that the men were well known smugglers —— an activity which no more offended against the moral notions of the community than did food rioting. Men such as this hardened by not infrequent brushes with the law, naturally found themselves at the head of a mob, but this is not to say that without their services no disturbance would have taken place. In that year of widespread rioting it is hardly to be expected that the miners of the Penzance district would have remained in their homes. After all, they had rioted in 1793, 1795, 1796 and they didn't miss out in 1812, so it is hardly likely that such a crisis year as 1801 would have escaped. A certain violence of disposition may have lead to the Richards brothers placing themselves in the forefront of the activity, but it does not necessarily follow that they represented the temperaments and dispositions of the main body of the rioters.

A St. Just miner, Henry Smith, was one of the leaders in his district during the riots of 1847. He would have appeared to have had a considerable popularity among his fellow miners, for when he was offered unfavourable terms to continue working his pitch at Boswidden Mine in 1853, the entire labour force struck work alleging that he was "a marked man" in consequence of his having taken an active part in organising a public meeting of miners to discuss strike action, but also because, "he acted a prominent part in the rise of the miners which took place some six years since, in consequence of the high price of flour." Smith's popularity clearly extended beyond the mine in which he worked, since a general strike of all the mines in the district was called in support of the Boswidden men. (173) This is the more impressive since Cornish miners were not at all accustomed to strike action.

Some disturbances may have arisen spontaneously. This would be especially likely in respect of price fixing by women in the markets in response to steeply inflating prices. This would seem to have been so at Launceston in 1801 (above p. 143) and at Falmouth in the same year (above p. 143).

Not all market place action can be viewed as spontaneous. The crowd at Penzance which tried to prevent the exportation of potatoes in 1818, was called together by the beating of a drum. (174) In general given the participation of several parishes, the agreed assembly points and the advance handbills, it seems that most food riots were organised and planned in advance.

Jacobinism and the Food Riots of the French War Years

So far the riots have been considered as responses to an economic and social situation, and not as forming any kind of politically motivated protest. It is nevertheless true that the riots of the years of the French wars were to some extent coloured by the popular Jacobinism of that time. It is even more certain that fear of Jacobinism coloured the responses of the authorities, especially during 1795-6.

A more desperate spirit seems to mark the actions of the rioters during these years, as at Truro in 1796, when seven tinners and a shoemaker were taken into custody following an assault on the Worcestershire Militia, sent into the county to quell the disturbances. A Redruth tinner was reported by witnesses to have refused to depart after the Riot Act had been read, and to have said:

> "What use would it be to go home? he should have as good or better living in prison",

and to have further expressed the opinion that he, "would as soon be killed as starved." (175)

The handbill from St. Just in 1795 (above p. 158) did specifically call upon the miners to arm themselves and preferably with firearms prior to a visit to Penzance, but it was not displayed in the blacksmith's shop until after the miners had already visited Penzance in an unarmed state and had been repulsed with little difficulty by the Volunteers. In the same year a party of miners waited on the magistrates at Helston and said that:

> "If corn were not procured for them on certain terms, they would assemble themselves and would enforce it, and they would not do as they had done last year, come unarmed and be awed by the Volunteers, but that they would be prepared and properly armed, and that things should be more equal." (176)

Nor were these the only signs of a different spirit abroad among the miners in those years. The Clerk of Kenwyn, having lost a shoe riding to the mining village of St. Agnes in March 1795, stopped at several blacksmiths but could not find one able to undertake the reshoeing of his horse, for they were busy at each forging pikes and making cutlasses. (177)

In the October of 1795, the High Constable of Pydar Hundred, when attempting to arrest four miners who had broken into a house and removed corn and malt, was prevented from so doing by a riotous crowd, and several shots were fired into the house into which he had fled for safety. (178)

On 31st December of that year, a Mrs. Herring received a letter claiming

to come from Polgooth and other mines, which pointed out the distress of the miners from want of corn, and stated the cause to be "such impious Monsters as you who have a plenty and to spare and we perishing with Hunger." By the consent of "many thousands of brave miners", and the consent and advice of "many respectable men of your Parish" who knew that she possessed stored grain, she was being given a caution. The letter continued:

> "... if after this caution, you still persist to keep your corn, or from the same motive refuse to sell it at a moderate price, We are thereby (sic) determined to assemble and immediately to march till we come to your God or your Mows, whome (sic) you esteem as such and pull it down and likewise your house ..." (179)

In the April of 1796 the following paper was circulated in the neighbourhood of Camborne:

> "Gentlemen of Camborne Church Town. This is to inform you, that unless you do stand to the agreement made concerning the butter and meat, that it shall be sold as we proposed (that is) meat of whatsoever kind shall not exceed 4d per pound, nor fresh butter 8d per pound, nor salt butter 6d per pound, nor salt pork 6d per pound, for if you do, we will take the liberty to call to see you again, for we have not given it up yet, for we will have it so:- or we will burn the Town and you in the mits (sic) of it." (180)

In the same month, four servants of a Breage farmer were roughly handled by a crowd of grain seeking miners. They were beaten with sticks and were dragged around by ropes placed around their necks. The farmer was not at home, but the tinners still felt that they had a score to settle with him, for the following notice was nailed to his door:

> "This is to give notice that if the inhabitants of this House is not home tomorrow morning by ten o'clock in the forenoon they may expect to see it all brocken open, and levelled to Ground." (181)

A corporal of the Worcestershire Militia was assaulted and beaten by a body of miners whilst on duty on the turnpike road about three miles from Truro. (182) All in all April 1796 was a month which the propertied classes in the county would not find it pleasant to recollect.

All these incidents took place at the height of the great Jacobin phobia, when the gentry could see the hand of Tom Paine behind even the most minor of disturbances. Sir Francis Basset who possessed more influence in west Cornwall than any other single man, could even smell Jacobins from a distance of three hundred miles. Although living in London at the time, he wrote to the Secretary of State, informing him that many of the miners "seemed strongly tinged with Jacobinical principles." (183) Finding that his colleagues on the Cornish bench, closer to the scene of the food riots, were not so clear sighted in this matter as himself, appearing inclined to deal leniently with men whom they had not realised had changed from hungry miners into seditious revolutionaries, Sir Francis hurried down to Cornwall to rescue the situation.

Securing fifty of the rioters he conveyed them to Bodmin, where at the Assize which followed, one of the ringleaders was sentenced to death. All of the magistrates except Basset were in favour of remitting the sentence. Basset was adamant. He complained that his fellow justices were putting him in a very bad light, for in favouring leniency, they were appearing to fix upon him the death of the convicted man. Nonetheless despite this disagreeable situation, he was determined not to shirk from his duty and would not prevent "an example being made which was highly necessary for the benefit of society." Basset related this story some years later to the artist Joseph Farrington, claiming with pride:

> "the effect of this resolute conduct was soon visible throughout the country, and the manners of the people were suddenly changed from rudeness and disrespect to proper obedience." (184)

The writings of Tom Paine were certainly not unknown in the Cornish mines, nor were the miners completely out of touch with what was going on in France. William Jenkin, a sympathetic Quaker mine steward, who was not the sort of man to invent Jacobins, remarked in 1795 of the miners around Penzance:

> "I am told that in St. Just, they went so far in imitation of our Gallic neighbours, as to plant the tree of liberty —— I am sorry to hear several cant words amongst the tinners much in use amongst the French ——" (185)

At Redruth, in the same year, a miner, drinking at the "Three Compasses", was in his cups, blaspheming the evangelists, wishing perdition of all the kings of the earth, and drinking the health of Tom Paine. On this occasion no stern action from Sir Francis Basset was necessary, Divine Providence intervened; the unfortunate man was struck on the spot, at the very moment of his seditious toast, with lock-jaw, and died in excrutiating torments. (186)

In 1801 a printed notice bearing two poems, "The Complaints of the Poor of Cornwall", and "The Weeping Mother", was endorsed by hand, "Starving — Bonparte (sic) and Bread before Oppression." The tone of the printed poems was fatalistic rather than seditious, the final verse of one reading:

> "My breth'ren do not mourn
> Although you suffer here,
> We shall rejoice while others weep,
> When Christ in clouds appear." (187)

The miners undoubtedly caught a little of the Jacobin spirit of the times, but any real differences were in the threats uttered and the protest language used, rather than in the basic motivation and forms of action used. The tinners from St. Just did visit Penzance on the occasion advertised by the poster in the blacksmith's shop, but despite its exhortations about firelocks and pikes, they went once again unarmed, and were once again repulsed with little difficulty by the Volunteers.

So strong was the food riot tradition by the time of the French Wars, that it is difficult to believe that in those years of exceptionally high food prices, the miners would not have rioted whatever the political situation.

The Reaction of the Authorities

The local magistrates had a special interest in the food riots, for apart from being responsible for the maintenance of public order, they were landowners as well as being justices, and often had considerable interests in mining. It was from them and their class that any effective initiative in setting up relief programmes had to come.

The first priority was the restoration of public order. In years of high food prices, at the earliest indications of a disposition on the part of the miners to riot, the justices generally called a county meeting and issued a proclamation. These proclamations followed a standard pattern. Those which I have examined, issued in 1801, 1812, 1831 and 1847, are to a large degree interchangeable. The basic form is simple; a statement to the effect that the magistrates had already endeavoured to lessen distress by raising money in the several parishes to provide flour for those most in need, precedes a plain statement that the magistrates are firmly resolved to take further measures in this direction, but that nothing can be done to effectively remove the evil until "it shall please Providence to give a cheaper supply of food." In the meantime they exhorted the people to bear their distress with patience, and expressed their trust that the Cornish miners, "would not allow their distress or their discontent or the persuasions of the ill-disposed to urge them on to acts of violence", which would do them no good, but would compel the magistrates, "to put in force those powers which the law has given them, for they have sufficient means at their disposal to repress acts of violence and to punish the wrong-doers." The proclamation just summarised was issued in 1847, (188) but the earlier addresses printed both in poster form, and in the columns of the local press are substantially the same. The poster of 1801 finishes with the uncompromising statement in extra-large print:

> "<u>esolved</u>
>
> That we will to the utmost of our Power afford the fullest protection to property and the free supply of the markets." (189)

This mixture of charity and repression was the usual reaction of the authorities. It was not perhaps always charity from the highest of motives, as a contributer to the <u>Gentleman's Magazine</u> pointed out in 1795:

> "Many plans are laid, and schemes proposed to keep our poor from perishing for want of bread; but alas! Mr. Urban, that is the lowest link

> in the chain of charity, indeed, I doubt whether it be any charity, except to ourselves —— to prevent their rising and knocking us on the head." (190)

The Food Riot served to throw the distresses of the poor into sharp relief. Whether compassion or fear was the motivating force, it is apparent that measures of relief were intensified after outbursts of rioting. It seems as if until their sufferings were thus forcibly expressed by the miners, many of the well-to-do lived in ignorance. When made aware of the true situation, the wealthy took a genuine, if fashionable interest in philanthropy. Public subscriptions were set up, and ladies held sales of work (191) and vied with each other to establish their favourite recipes for charity soups, the criterion of excellence was the filling of the most bellies at the cheapest cost. Gallons of liquid were produced from ingredients in comparison with which the famous loaves and fishes were a veritable feast.

The mine agents provided supplies of barley for their workmen, purchased from subscriptions provided by the Adventurers, moved both by compassion and by the desire to avoid the work stoppages which food rioting entailed. The West Briton thought that the riots of 1812 would, "induce the more wealthy part of the community to exert themselves in order to procure a supply of provisions for their suffering neighbours." (192)

It was often far from easy to purchase a supply of corn for relief measures even when funds had been collected. The magistrates of the western division of the county wrote to the Privy Council in 1795, that they had used their "utmost endeavours to procure a supply of corn," but had met with no success. (193) A plea from St. Hilliary in the same year begged that if no corn could sent, "pease or anything eatable", would be a great relief. The writer of this letter claimed that persons in the district were fainting at their labour through hunger, and feared that if no relief were forthcoming, great numbers in west Cornwall would perish through "absolute hunger". (194)

In that year too, the Vicar of Wendron, who had secured an early supply of barley for the relief of the poor, was offered a guinea a Winchester bushel

for some of it by the inhabitants of a neighbouring parish. (195) The vigilance of the authorities in taking action against traders who exploited their customers by giving short weight, was evident in periods of food crisis. The cases of this kind which are reported in the local press in the riot years, lead one to wonder just how extensive the practice was when their was no food crisis to stir the conscience of the magistrate.*

The immediate concern of the magistrates was the restoration of order, using the local resources of the special constables and the Volunteers where they proved sufficient, and hurriedly sending for the military when they did not. In normal times the strength of the military permanently stationed near the mining districts would be unequal to deal with any but the smallest and least determined of crowds. A small detachment was stationed at Pendennis Castle but its effectiveness was limited, as in 1727, when brought by the commanding officer to the assistance of the civil power, it was numerically too weak to do other than stand by the rioters seised corn. (196) The military were in any case always reluctant to involve themselves in civil

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*In 1757 protesters appear to have wanted to push local magistrates into petitioning the king to prohibit Maltsters from making any more malt for the year, to judge from a letter which was found in the Market House at St. Austell:

> "To Mr. John Soal Esqr. at Penrice, St. Austell, Cornwall,
> These
> Sir, Wee the poor of this Niborhood do desire you as you are chief at present that you will petishon His Majesties Grace to hinder the Malsters, that the (sic) make no more Malt for this Year, for Wee can live without Drink but not without Bread, for Wee must all starve if not Timly prevented. This we implore you first with Tears - But if you be sleeping and Wee starving by your Side, Wee will soon gather, and burn your house, and destroye both You and Yours; For if the Enemy be so near it is time to stirr - See Wee offer you Life and Death, chuse which you please - Fortishue, Grigar and Carlion shall share with you."
>
> (Gazette 29th Jan. 1757)

disturbances without the strictest authority from the War Office.

The nearest large garrison on permanent duty was at Plymouth, two days march from the mining districts. It was possible that a fast riding messenger could get a request to the garrison commander there within a day of an outbreak, but without authorisation from the government, or unless he had already been placed on the alert by the government, the commander was likely to await War Office instructions before complying with a request for troops. The experience of 1773 will serve to illustrate the difficulty of obtaining military assistance promptly. The miners visited Penryn on the 8th February, and the town officials wrote immediately to the commanding officer at Plymouth requesting assistance. The officer wrote to the War Office on the 10th informing them of the request but saying that he had not complied with it, since, "he did not feel himself authorised to send a party upon the request of a Deputy Mayor and a Deputy Recorder." (197) Authorisation from the War Office was not sent until the 12th, presumably reaching Plymouth on the 14th or 15th, in any event the troops did not arrive in the riot area until the 17th, by which time, although isolated outbreaks caused the Secretary at War to authorise the sending of a further detachment on the 25th, rioting had largely ceased.* (198)

In 1796 the suppression of riots was assisted by the fact that the Worcestershire Militia, sent to the county during the disturbances of the previous year, remained there with standing orders to co-operate with the civil authorities. (199) In general, not only would the government be reluctant to tie up troops in a restricted vicinity for prolonged periods once the immediate objective of restoring order had been secured, but the civil authorities themselves often found the soldiers unwelcome guests, once they

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*In the 1847 riots at Redruth, the railway was used to rush soldiers from Pensance to the town. (Mss. Diary of Thomas Nicholl (C.R.O.) June 4th 1847).

again began to feel secure. The magistrates of Penryn in 1748, entreated a local peer to exert his influence and "prevent any more troops being destin'd for this place as we have already more than we can reasonably accommodate and they make no question sufficient to protect us against any attempts the Tinners will make on this place for the future." (200) Troops had after all to be provisioned at a time their presence was itself due to the fact that food prices were high. The Militia which marched from Falmouth to Redruth in 1812 to quell an outbreak, hardly had legitimate grounds for surprise when it could not find bread for itself on arrival. (201)

Expense apart, relations between the civil and military authorities were often strained, neither being fully inclined to take orders from the other. The presence of soldiers in a town was in itself a provocation to violence on the part of the hungry townspeople.

In the French War years, the local Volunteer companies were useful in keeping control of a riot situation until a detachment of regulars could be obtained. It is perhaps more than coincidence, that the Cornish towns which most zealously took up the patriotic call to arms, were Penryn and Penzance, the towns most frequently visited by food rioters. At any rate nobody was very keen to use the manpower which the tinners would have provided to form armed companies of Volunteers. (202) It was not that the miners could not be relied upon to oppose the French. In 1798 the Sherborne Mercury was receiving accounts of, "the zeal and assiduity of the tinners and other inhabitants of Cornwall who are ready to turn out 'One and All'." (203) The basic loyalty of the miners was not in doubt, but this was no guarantee of the use to which they might put arms whilst waiting for the French invasion.

In general the Volunteer companies could be relied upon to effectively oppose the miners, since their composition gave them little identity of interest with the miners. The Illogan Volunteers turned out in 1801 "in a very gallant and spirited manner", to quell disturbances amongst the miners at Redruth. (204) Formed from the tradesmen, gentry and their servants, the

Volunteers were unlikely to take the side of the miners. The Penzance Volunteers were described by a contemporary in 1795 as "composed of shopkeeping Jews, butchers, and blacksmiths." (205)

There was at least one occasion when the loyalty of the Volunteers was not so certain. The Tregony company, called out in 1801 to deal with minor incursions into the farming regions, did not, in the words of the magistrate who had summoned their assistance, "all deserve the thanks of Government." One Middlecoat, who would appear to have been an officer, complained before setting out that the farmers, "exacted too high a price for corn." Later in the day he was heard to say that the farmers ought to furnish the Volunteers with corn at a reduced price, explaining what he meant by a reduced price by saying at the price they agreed to sell to the tinners. The whole company was said to have been "mutinous and disorderly in the extreme." (206)

In general it is the case that the magistrates' reaction to food rioting was far from both panic stricken fear and from extreme severity in suppression. After all, with disturbances so frequent that an adult miner whose life spanned the French War years could have been involved in eight in his lifetime, magistrates in many cases sat on the bench through as many. A man like Richard Polwhele, fervent anti-Jacobin as he was, could describe those who saw the seeds of revolution in the disturbances of 1812, as shewing, "consternation without a cause." (207)

The magistrates were after the mid-eighteenth century very familiar with the food riot as a recurrent part of the local protest pattern. They expected them to occur in scarcity years, and they were familiar with the forms which they customarily took. The Chairman addressing Quarter Sessions in 1831, remarked that the disturbances of 1830 had arisen from:

> "A deep rooted prejudice that miners entertain, and which they have entertained as long as I can remember, against the export of corn." (208)

Nothing so clearly underlines the exceptionality of Francis Basset's action in insisting upon the execution of a ringleader in 1796, than the lightness of the

sentences passed on ringleaders in 1801. At the October Sessions, three persons were imprisoned for three months, one for one month, two were fined £5 and nine were fined one shilling.

Such an attitude is indicative of complacency as much as sympathy. Some years earlier, a clerical magistrate in the mining districts, the Rev. John Collins, more clearly indicated where his sympathies lay. Arriving at a farm house whose tenant was refusing to supply wheat to a body of miners, he offered to pay himself for every bushel, which offer being refused, he told the miners to take what they wanted. The farmer commenced a prosecution against Collins for felony and the good vicar made a triumphal progress to the Sessions, receiving the blessings and good wishes of the poor all the way, to be straight away acquitted by his brother justices. Polwhele, himself a prominent magistrate of the French War years, relates this story in a manner which in no way implies disapproval of Collins's action. (209)

The Food Riot Tradition

The frequency and longevity of this form of direct action protest in Cornwall requires some explanation. Reasons why other more organized forms of protest were slow to develop in the county form the basis of the concluding section of this study. This, however, is a convenient place to ask why the food riot was resorted to so frequently.

The short answer is that because only through direct action could the eighteenth century poor express genuine grievances, and importantly, because the food riot was in some senses an effective means of protest. It was so in two important ways; firstly it precipitated relief measures, and secondly the immediate objectives of the rioters were often achieved. Grain was successfully stopped from leaving the ports, and hoarded grain was brought out and sold at the market. The effect of rioting in precipitating relief measures, has already been noted (above p. 169) but an occasion might be noted when the crowd set up its own relief programme. In 1831 a crowd of two

thousand miners visited Manaccan to prevent corn exportation. They were assured that no further exportation would take place, but instead of departing immediately, they first, "laid the village under contribution for food, and the place was left perfectly destitute of everything that could be ate or drunk." (210)

The fact that the miners were frequently able to carry out the planned purpose of a riot, is directly related to the fact that military assistance took so long to arrive. If the tinners visited a port or market town without warning, and the inhabitants were in no position to resist, then the tinners objectives would normally be achieved. William Jenkin wrote from Redruth in 1801:

> "I have had the disgusting sight of a riotous assemblage of Tinners from Gwennap who broke into the Market and are now compelling the people to sell potatoes, fish, butter, salt pork etc. at the prices they chose to fix —— finding no body to stop them (for we have neither Magistrates nor military here ..." (211)

Such success could not be hoped for the following week, by which time the assistance of the military had been obtained:

> "The riots are finished for the present —— Sir John Aubyn and some other justices have attended here this week and a considerable force of Civil and Military power ... has preserved (or rather restored the peace...)." (212)

In the same year, a writer urged that prompt action be taken against the ringleaders through the setting up of a special commission to avoid waiting for the next assize. He feared that once the sense of urgency was past, the court might treat the rioters leniently which would be dangerous in that it would encourage future rioters, "especially as the mobs have certainly in various instances carried their point." (213)

The frequency of the food riot, suggests that the rioters had faith in its effectiveness. This faith was not entirely misplaced. In general rioters were not suppressed with the full rigour of the law, they often succeeded in their short term aims, and they succeeded in precipitating measures of relief.

It is true that not all members of Cornish society would have appreciated such a functional justification, but the Home Office papers clearly reveal that those who scream the loudest of outrage and revolution are the corporations of the market towns. The reports of the county magistrates tend to be rather less strident. There is little doubt that the troops sent into county were protecting property rather than life, for only against the former was there any real threat.

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Depression and Discontent in the 1780's

In the 1780's the Cornish copper mines faced bitter competition from newly discovered mines in Angelsey. These mines were capable of being worked at small expense, while the older Cornish mines were deep and already incurring heavy fixed capital costs from the use of steam pumping engines.

The introduction of Boulton and Watt engines into the Cornish mines from 1777, Watt claimed saved them from extinction,* (1) since their drainage problems had by them passed the potentialities of the existing engines, which also had the serious drawback of a heavy fuel consumption. The reduction in costs deriving from the more efficient and economical Watt engines gave a stimulus to Cornish mining, and the revival of old mines and the opening of new ones was a direct consequence. There was a resulting increase in copper production in the eighties without any appreciable rise in demand, in a market in which Angelsey was by now highly competitive. Correspondingly there was a fall in prices which returned many of the mines to their previous unprofitable position.

It was in this situation, that the firm of Boulton and Watt, and especially Boulton himself, began to exercise an important influence on the future development of the industry. The firm received its income from the Cornish mines, not only in receipts from engine sales, but also in the form of monthly dues, premiums on the fuel savings secured from the use of their engines. A fall in prices, making it likely that many mines would close would have seriously affected the firm's income. Since the Cornish mines at this time provided the main market for their engines, the ruin of the mining industry would have been disasterous for the firm.

Boulton at first tried to encourage the Adventurers by taking shares in the industry, but this proved an inadequate remedy as the position of the mines became increasingly serious in the early eighties. Accordingly he turned

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*For a qualification of Watt's claim see J. Rowe opp. cit. pp. 75-6.

his attention to the marketing side.

Here the problem was two fold; firstly to change the relationship with the Welsh copper smelters, and secondly to restrict the competition with Angelsey. It appears that the prices paid by the Welsh smelters for Cornish ores were even lower than those merited by the depressed state of the industry. (2) The Mines, because they were disunited, and because their capital was small in relation to their heavy working costs, were dependant on the monthly ore sales to the smelters to enable them to meet the working costs of the next month. They were thus in no position to refuse the low prices offered by the smelters. In his attempts to break this hold, Boulton was supported by Thomas Williams, the manager of the Angelsey mines, who was also in competition with the smelting companies.*

After various suggestions, a re-organisation of the marketing side of the industry was effected in the autumn of 1785. Fresh capital was clearly needed if the Cornish mines were to control the smelting and marketing of their own ores. On September 1st, 1785, the Cornish Metal Company with a nominal capital of £500,000 was set up. The Company was to buy all the ores raised in Cornwall from September 1st, 1785 to September 1st, 1792, and to sell the copper in a metallic state. The associated mines of Cornwall were to sell their output to the Company at prices fixed by a Governor and thirty-six directors, two-thirds of whom were to be nominated by the mining interest. In effect an organisation similar to the kartell came into existence.

The industry could now hope to reach an agreement with Angelsey on price maintenance. An agreement was made by which a minimum price for all copper produced by the two districts was fixed. Cornwall's share was to be three fifths of all sales, Angelsey's two fifths. No attempt was made at this stage

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*In 1778, Angelsey produced 1,200 tons of ore, Cornwall 3,000. In 1785 the respective figures were 3,000 and 4,000. There is little doubt of a high degree of over-production.

to impose any limit on overall production. The experiment was not a conspicous success. The formation of the combine brought about a rise in the price of copper, but this encouraged the miners, who began to fully exploit the potentialities of their mines, with the result that a stock of unsaleable copper soon began to accumulate. This together with the fact that the old smelting companies turned out to have larger stocks on their hands than had been realised, and considerably undersold the combine, put the Company in serious difficulties.

At the Company's meeting in 1787, it was estimated that existing stocks were at least equal to two years supply. By this time several small mines were already closing. Disputes with Angelsey were occurring, and it became increasingly apparent that only a deliberate restriction of production could save the industry. It was at this point that difficulties with the labouring miners began to emerge. The miners, hearing of a possible cessation of work, visited Truro in large numbers, to pull down the house of the manager of the Company, associating the Company with the closure of mines. Boulton whose prominence in the undertaking was obvious, was threatened with personal violence. (3) The crowd which marched to Truro is said to have numbered about four hundred. (4)

There was a clear difference of opinion between Boulton and many of the Cornish Lords and Adventurers. Boulton described every mine as, "obstinate and determined not to give up, for they say they may as well sink their money in employing the poor as to maintain them without working." (5) He claimed that there was a lack of firmness among the Cornish Lords and Adventurers, that they were afraid of the miners. "The adventurers say they will not sink their money for Boulton and Watt's benefit alone, but all parties ought to contribute ... to the employment of the poor. (6)

Not without grounds, Boulton suspected the Cornishmen of trying to direct the hostility of the labouring miners towards himself and Watt:

> "(they) would inflame and misguide the minds of the Miners provided they could deter us from taking savings (i.e. fuel premiums). (7)

At a meeting in October 1787, the mines agreed to break their agreements with both the Metal Company and with Angelsey, and revert to their former methods of sale. In order to prevent the Company from further depressing the market by unloading its accumulated stocks, the mines were to pay its subscribers £17,000 per annum for five years. The results were disasterous. Angelsey immediately lowered its prices, which still further reduced the sales of Cornish ore. The renewal of competition was, however, disliked by both sides, and before the end of the year it was decided to come to terms again. The sale of the ores produced in both places were to be put in the hands of a single agent, Thomas Williams of Angelsey. The price of copper was fixed at joint meetings in London. Production was to be limited to 3,000 tons per annum each, and Cornwall was permitted to sell twice as much as Angelsey in 1788, in subsequent years sales were to be equal. It was only with difficulty that the Cornish could be prevailed upon to restrict production or close down their mines. Once again attempts to do the latter brought a reaction from the labouring miners, especially in 1788 when large and important mines were affected.

In April, the miners at North Downs gathered, and seemed to be of the opinion that Thomas Wilson, Boulton and Watt's agent in Cornwall, was responsible for that mine's projected closure. Wilson went to the mine to meet them, and was unmolested but unable to persuade them to disperse. The crowd went to meet a Mr. Westlake, who was on his way to the mine, "to draw him without horses." Westlake was the one adventurer who was solidly opposed to closing down the mine. He refused their offer to draw him, and did not address the crowd. At the Mine Wilson spoke to them again and they dispersed. He met with much personal abuse, and was concerned enough about his future safety to move his family from the district. (8)

Five days later, he was reporting that the miners were once again quiet, but only because they wrongly believed that the mine would not now be stopped. Westlake had become the miners' hero, and was even more outspoken against the closure. Wilson feared that he would be "productive of mischief", as he was "a drunken idiot", who was, "calculated to glory in being popular". (9) Westlake had publicly declared himself resolved to carry on production even if the other adventurers withdrew, and thought it his right to do so. The lord, Sir John St. Aubyn, sympathised with Westlake and the labouring miners. Wilson and Watt saw the trouble as being instigated by enemies of the Metal Company, among whom St. Aubyn, and his kinsman Francis Basset were clearly numbered. (10)

Wilson was later confirmed in his opinion that the miners' hostility was directed towards him, not on personal grounds, but because of his connection with Boulton and Watt. The firm was believed by the miners, not only to have been instrumental in setting up the Metal Company, but also to have financial interests in Angelsey. There was no truth in this latter assertion, but it illustrates the depth of the hostility which had been fermented among the labouring miners against the Soho firm. (11)

At North Downs, to the opposition of the Lord, one of the adventurers, and the men, was now added that of the mine captains. They created fresh difficulties for Wilson. "Without any reason or orders", they announced to the miners that the mine would continue, and even set several new pitches:

> "This has raised such an excess of joy, in the people of Redruth that the town has been in a ferment ever since."

Wilson advised the captains to undeceive the men as gradually as possible, for if they were told straight away that the mine was still intended for closure, then, "God only knows the consequence." (12)

More than a week later, St. Aubyn finally consented to the closure. Wilson had met with no insults on his latest visit to the mine, and was in high hopes that the men's anger against him was on the wane. A large body of

opinion in the town was still of the opinion that there would be a disturbance on the day the mine was stopped. (13)

Trouble appeared even more likely in view of the fact that a second mine in the district was due to stop on the following day. The fact that there was no serious breach of the peace is perhaps best explained by the fact that there was a party of soldiers in the town and that more were expected. (14)

All was not finally over. Westlake was still saying that he would take possession of the mine if the other adventurers stopped it, and Wilson feared there might yet be trouble from the men if Westlake stirred it up. (15) Since the consent of the Lord had been obtained, there was little Westlake could do on his own, and on 24th May, two of the mine's four engines were stopped, and the remaining two were to be stopped the following week. (16) On 31st May, the mine was finally stopped, and Wilson reported with relief, "we have got home all quiet and peaceable." (17)

The depression continued; the market was still over-supplied. In August Wilson wrote to Watt:

> "It is really dreadful to think what must come of the poor people to us who must be witness to their distresses, there is nothing but starvation or emigration for them." (18)

In September, the important Chacewater Mine was in difficulties. The Lord, Lord Falmouth, was prepared to give up his dues for some time, if the mine could be kept going, and Wilson suggested that Boulton and Watt should do the same with their premiums:

> "I really think you should, as our stopping would be such a distress to the neighbourhood, that any assistance given to keep the mine going would be a benefit more than giving 10 times the sum in charity." (19)

The necessary reduction in production was not achieved until October 1789. Only then could the Metal Company begin to dispose of its accumulated stocks. Complete ruin was averted, but distress was still prevalent. The

labouring miners were experiencing deep poverty, unemployment, or employment at starvation wages. Among them the "spirit of violence was on the ferment." (20) When it was decided to close one mine in the autumn of 1789, they "intimated a visit to take down the greatest house in Truro." (21) The mine remained open. High food prices occasioned fears of rioting, (above p.137) and John Wesley, visiting the county in August, met a crowd of miners who had come to Truro, "being nearly starved", to "beg or demand an increase of their wages, without which they could not live." (22)

In 1790 the situation began to resolve itself. The great cheap store of Angelsey ore was becoming exhausted. A decline in Angelsey production meant that the Metal Company could dispose of sufficient of its stocks to offer higher prices for new ores. By the time the Company came to an end early in 1792, its position had enormously improved. It had sold the whole of its stocks and wiped out its debts. Copper prices rose steadily from 1790.

The prime mover behind the establishment of the Company, Mathew Boulton, had in the meantime undergone a reversal of interest. By 1790 the development of his coinage business, meant that so far as copper was concerned his main interest was no longer on the producer, but on the consumer side. In addition other markets for his engines were decreasing the firms dependence on the Cornish mines. He was therefore content to let the Company die, and probably helped to bring it to an end even before the expiration of its contract with the miners. In any case with the decline of ore production in Angelsey, the demand for Cornish ores was bouyant and any attempt to renew the combination was unnecessary.

Prosperity returned to the Cornish mining industry, but there were to be yet occasions, when representatives of the firm of Boulton and Watt were to face hostile crowds of Cornish miners. Watt's patent for his steam engine was not due to expire until 1800, and he used the courts to prevent other engineers from building engines for the Cornish mines. Engineers such as Trevithick, Hornblower, and Bull were making improvements in design, but the mines were

prevented from using them because of Watt's use of court injunctions. Mines might have expected to secure these new engines on terms more favourable than those which required them to pay the hated fuel savings to Boulton and Watt.

1795 was a year of severe food crisis, marked by widespread rioting, and Cornish landlords and adventurers were not averse in that year to diverting the attention of the labouring miners once again to Boulton and Watt. Serious rioting occurred at Poldice Mine in July. The adventurers rejected an offer from Boulton and Watt, and asked Bull to construct an engine. When the firm obtained a legal injunction to stop this, rioting occurred. The frightened Soho agent, Lander, asked permission to leave the county. Another who had given evidence in the case against Bull had already fled to Birmingham, and other employees were intimidated or bribed into leaving the service of Boulton and Watt.* (23)

With the securing of the injunction, work at Poldice had ceased. Not only did the adventurers halt work on the new engine, but they also drew up the pumps from the deep levels, making it certain that there would be a delay before the mine could commence working again. This caused a considerable ferment among the working miners. A large body marched from the mine to Redruth, where they surprised William Murdock, the Soho engineer, and forced him to march back to the mine with them. There they made him promise never to come near the mine again, and let him escape unhurt. Murdock had roused their antipathy because he had made copies of some of Bull's drawings and sent them to Boulton and Watt, to whom they had been useful as evidence in obtaining the injunction. (24)

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*Dr. Rowe refers to a group of adventurers who were determined to drive the Soho men from the county. (opp. cit. p. 106) A letter from William Jenkin about the Poldice decision to construct a Bull engine, supports this. Only three adventurers with a combined share of a fifth, wanted the Bull engine and not a new Watt engine. These men enforced their will on the majority by threatening to withdraw their capital, which might have brought about the closure of the mine during this period of financial difficulty. (Jenkin Mss. Jenkin to R. Phillips - 30th July 1795).

Watt's patent lapsed in 1800, and a period of conflict in Cornish mining history, marked by bitter intransigence on both sides ended. The active role of the crowd in these disputes was not great, but its presence was important. It lurked behind almost every line of Wilson's anxious letters to Soho, and it conditioned the reactions of the Lords to mine closures. Just as the gentry of the 1740's had used the crowd against the Wesleys, so the landlords and shareholders of the most distressed period in the eighteenth century history of copper mining, were able to divert hostile working class reactions to dire distress against the outsiders, Boulton and Watt.

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(1) S. Smiles, Lives of th Engin , Boulton and Watt (1865) p. 217
(2) G.C. Allen, "An Eighteenth Century Combination in the Copper Mining Industry." Ec nomic J urnal (March 1923) p. 76. The account of the formation of the Cornish M tal Company is based on this article and on the Boulton and Watt Mss. in Birmingham City Library. See also: J.R. Harris and R.O. Roberts, "Eighteenth Century Monopoly : The Cornish Metal Company Agreements of 1785." Business History v. (1962-3) p. 69
(3) Boulton and Watt Mss. Box 20 Boulton to Watt, Chacewater 5th Oct. 1787
(4) ibid. above to above 3rd Oct. 1787
(5) ibid. above to above 11th Oct. 1787
(6) above to above 8th Oct. 1787
(7) above to above 8th Oct. 1787
(8) ibid. Thomas Wilson to Boulton and Watt, 14th April 1788
(9) ibid. above to James watt 19th April 1788
(10) ibid. above to James Watt 19th April 1788
(11) ibid. Wilson to Boulton and Watt 21st April 1788.
(12) ibid. Wilson to Boulton and Watt 21st April 1788.
(13) above to above 3rd May 1788
(14) ibid. above to above 21st April 1788
(15) ibid. above to above 17th May 1788
(16) ibid. Wilson to James watt, 24th May 1788
(17) ibid. above to above, 31st May 1788
(18) ibid. Wilson to Boulton and Watt, 2nd August 1788
(19) ibid. above to above, 17th Sept. 1788
(20) Allen opp. cit. p. 83
(21) Allen opp. cit. p. 83
(22) J. Wesley, Journal 18th August 1789 (Pearce p. 169)
(23) J. Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution (Liverpool 1953) p. 106
(24) Jenkin Mss. Jenkin to Richard Phillips, 30th July 1795

Other Disturbances

Food rioting, the anti-Wesleyan riots,* and the riots of the 1780's were the main examples of crowd action, which were more than isolated and localised in their incidents. There were however, several isolated outbreaks which merit description.

In 1766 there was a disturbance at Redruth. About a hundred tinners, protesting against the introduction into the county of Staffordshire and other earthenware, broke into the market and smashed all of such wares which they could lay their hands on. They then proceeded to Falmouth with the same object in view. Being unable to force their way into the Town Hall where a large amount of pottery was stored, they were about to set fire to it, when they were pacified by some of the aldermen of the town. These gentlemen promised to discourage the use and sale of pottery wares by every means in their power, and going to a pewterer's bespoke a quantity of pewter dishes as evidence of their sympathy with the tinners. The tinners then dispersed peacefully. (1)

There are no other recorded instances of rioting of this kind, arising from the declining market for pewter. In the long run this is hardly surprising. The rapid rise of the copper industry in the eighteenth century meant that tin was becoming a secondary product and was no longer the mainstay of the county's economy, nor the means of support of the majority of the miners. In addition the exploitation of Cornish china clays from the late eighteenth century, meant that the county was soon to develop a strong interest in the production of ceramics.

On 1814, there was a minor incident in Truro, where the populace burnt in effigy a miller who had adulterated his flour with china clay, and sold

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*The anti-Wesleyan riots are described in another chapter. (below pp. 231-9) There were also various breach of order by crowds, connected with smuggling and wrecking activities; these are also described elsewhere. (below pp. 332-48).

large quantities to the miners. It is stated that there was a serious, if temporary, effect on the health of the miners. Almost the entire labour force of Wheal Unity was ill. The adventurers of the mine subscribed £50 towards bringing the persons responsible to justice. (2)

It appears that the same motivation was behind a disturbance at Wendron in 1837. Joseph Andrews, the contractor who supplied bread to the Helston Union, was faced with an angry crowd when he arrived to distribute bread in the village. The crowd was about two hundred strong and violent expressions were uttered against him. Assaults were made on him by the women, "to whom he appeared to be particularly obnoxious." It was at first thought that this disturbance was a demonstration against the administration of the Poor Law, but the examination of a defendent who was being tried for assault, revealed that the primary cause was Andrew's having supplied bread of a deplorable quality. This was proved to have been the case; it was admitted by Andrews, and his contract was removed. (3)

In 1831 there was an isolated incident at Fowey Consols and Lanescot mines. The miners there had formed a combination to limit under-bidding at tribute settings. Such a combination was very rare in the history of Cornish mining. (below p. 382).

A great number of them gathered at the mines one morning, and attempted to seize two tributers who had refused to enter the combination, and who threatened with summary punishment being inflicted on them had taken refuge in the counting house. The magistrates were summoned, and the crowd not dispersing after the reading of the Riot Act, seven of the rioters were taken into custody. On their being put into a chaise for conveyance to Bodmin gaol, a violent attempt was made to rescue them, but after a conflict which lasted for more than an hour, they were conveyed to Bodmin.

On the following day the miners collected in large numbers determined to march to Bodmin to rescue their comrades. As a precaution the High Sheriff and the neighbouring magistrates rushed to Bodmin, and swore in about forty

special constables. The Royal Cornwall Militia were also called out and stationed in and around the prison.

It was not until the following evening that the news that the miners were approaching was received. The townspeople prepared to meet them. The constables were armed, the doors were barricaded and "all was expectation." At about six o'clock, a crowd mostly composed of women and children entered the town. They sent a deputation to the Sheriff to explain their objective. He reasoned with them but was firm, and sent them back to the crowd accompanied by some gentlemen who reasoned with the mob, and at length induced them to depart. (4)

R fer ces

(1) A. Rees, "Cornwall's Place in Ceramic History", Report Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society (1935) p. 61
(2) est Briton 10th Nov. 1837
(3) Cornwall Gazette 17th Sept. 1837
(4) ibid. 26th Feb. 1831

Conclusion: The Presence of the Crowd

The crowd was frequently an effective protest group, in that it often secured its objectives, and even where it did not, at least succeeded in making its grievances known to the authorities. It has been shown that food rioters were often successful in preventing shipments of grain, and in fixing prices in the markets. The context of this success was the problem of public order when only troops possessed sufficient weight to deal with large and determined crowds, and their arrival on the scene could seldom be immediate.

Other rioters too were often not without success in terms of their immediate objectives. The threat of rioting prevented a mine closure in 1789 (above p. 187), and in the case of the incident in 1837 the Union contract was taken from an individual who supplied bad bread, and the individual charges with an assault on his person acquitted. (above p. 191).

Just how constantly present a factor the Cornish crowd was, can be emphasised by counting the number of incidents in which miners born in specific years could have participated. A miner born in 1725, would remember from his boyhood the riots of 1729 and 1737, and could have taken part in riots in 1748, 1757, 1766 and 1773. He could also have been involved in the pottery smashing incident of 1766 and in the riots against the Wesleyans in the 1740's. If he survived into his sixties he could have witnessed the disturbances of the 1780's.

A miner born in 1750, would have childhood memories of the food riots of 1757, and could have participated in food riots in 1773, 1793, 1795, 1796 and 1801. If he were lucky enough to live to be 62, then he could also have experienced the food riots of 1812. Apart from food rioting, he would have been a youth at the time of the pottery smashing, and have participated in the riots of the 1780's.

Similar results can be obtained by doing the same calculation for miners born in 1775 and 1800. Without doubt, the crowd was a fact of life to both the miners and to those who had dealings with them. At times it was powerful enough to influence the course of events; at all times it had to be conciliated or suppressed, for it could hardly be ignored.

THE MINING COMMUNITY

The Mining Community in its Geographical and Social Setting

The Cornish miners were industrial workers, but in general rural dwellers. As such the mining communities belonged neither to the agrarian pattern of old England, nor to the newer pattern of the growing industrial towns. They combined features of both, and they possessed traits which were characteristic of neither.

For the most part the Cornish towns stood apart from the mining areas. They were primarily market towns, whose prosperity reflected that of the area which they served. Two towns, Redruth and Camborne, were intimately connected with the mining industry: they could hardly fail to be so, since they were so situated in the mining district that in places mineral veins even ran under the towns themselves. Redruth had already by the early eighteenth century the greatest corn market of the west of the county. (1) Camborne grew more slowly; in 1770 there were only seven houses in the Churchtown; by 1800 there were 120, and by 1841 the population of the town with its growing suburbs was 4,377. (1) It had become a Market town in 1802. (2)

Elsewhere miners did not form a significant proportion of the urban population, but lived in the surrounding villages and hamlets. The richest of all the mining parishes of the central district, Gwennap, whose population in 1851 was 10,465, contained no single settlement larger than a village. Besides the Churchtown of Gwennap itself, there was the large village of Carharrack, and smaller villages at Twelveheads, Bissoe, Scorrier and Crofthandy. Until 1835, the large mining village of St. Day was also in this parish. The pattern was similar elsewhere. Until 1837, the large mining township of Chacewater had been part of the scattered parish of Kenwyn and Kea. In general the nuclear village-parish as a well defined settlement unit was rare in the mining districts. It was not only that parishes tended to be comprised of a severality of settlements, but also that around these component units, many smaller ones from hamlets to isolated cottages were scattered.

A survey of 1812 described these cottages as giving an "untidy appearance" to a countryside already littered with the waste of mines and ruined engine houses. A form of appearance which clearly distinguished the mining from the non-mining districts. (3) It was a characteristic of the mine labour force, that it lived in mining settlements in little direct contact with other social groups. In very few instances did miners form part of the varied occupational structure of an urban settlement. Typically the towns were connected with the mining industry: Truro served the important mining parishes of Kenwyn and Kea, Perranzabuloe, St. Agnes and others, Helston served Wendron, Breage and Gerrnoe, and Penzance, St. Just and the far west. Such towns were not in themselves mining settlements.

A further point about the geography of the region is worth remarking. In all cases the mining settlements were in close proximity to the coast, and some settlements were actually on the coast. This close contact had an influence on many aspects of the miners life.

The social order of the mining settlements depended neither exclusively upon the landlord-tenant relationship, nor upon something corresponding to the mill-owner - factory operative relationship. There was no figure comparable to the Northern mill-owner or to the factory master of any area. The Cost Book method of financing mining ventures whereby a plurality of adventurers held shares, meant that there was no identification of the employer with a single class of persons. The adventurers ranged from peers of the realm through lesser gentry and clergy, to tradesmen in the towns, and as the nineteenth century progressed, to pure speculators who were never resident in the county.

If, however, the single owner-entrepreneur could not be identified, the owner of the mineral rights clearly could. These men, known as the "lords", (which only coincidentally implied nobility of birth) were the apex of the social structure of the mining districts. A rich mine in the mid-nineteenth century could bring in dues to the owner of mineral rights as much as £1,000

a year from an acre of land. The families who held land in the mining districts found themselves substantially enriched when the great copper expansion of the eighteenth century began. Frequently they themselves became adventurers in the mines whose mineral rights they owned, and tied their fortunes ever more closely to the mining industry.

In origin the lords differed. Not surprisingly the copper boom produced new families like the Lemons or Dennithornes, (the head of the latter pointed out to a visitor in 1750, a mine from which he had received £12,000 in six months)(4) but it also enriched established families; noble ones like the Earls of Falmouth or the Godolphins, and those like the Bassets of Tehidy or the St. Aubyns of Clowance who could trace their ancestry back to Norman times, and who were subsequently to be enobled.

A writer in 1857, remarked that the Cornish people had been less led and swayed by aristocratic influences than the inhabitants of most English counties, but went on to remark that this was not inconsistent with the exercise of great local influence by individual gentlemen, instancing Lord de Dunstanville, as Sir Francis Basset became in 1796, as exercising "a kindly authority among them hardly surpassed by that of the Grenvilles and Trelawneys of old times." (5) The key to such influence lay in a stake in the mining industry, and when such a stake was coupled with land ownership, influence could be extensive.

One such influential family the Lemons, possessed an influence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, whose basis was very recent indeed. Of his contemporary, Sir William Lemon, Sir Francis Basset remarked that his grandfather had been a miner "without a shilling", but who had become worth £200,000. (6) Sir Francis himself claimed Norman descent, but his fortune was of recent aggrandisement. Lord Hardwicke writing to the Earl of Bute in 1761 remarked of Sir Francis's father, that he was "full of money, from copper mines, discovered and worked upon his estate, not many years ago." (7)

The mining boom brought such families to spheres of influence which they had not previously occupied. Polwhele, an historian of descent from an old Cornish family himself, remarked in 1797 that except for a few very old families, the gentry of Cornwall, owed their dignity either to the borough or the mine. (8) In terms of social attitudes and outlook the new men differed little from the older families whose ranks they joined. Namier described the older Francis Basset as, "a Tory by tradition, estate and connexions", (9) but it was of the miner's grandson, Sir William Lemon, that Polwhele wrote:

> "In him we justly admire the old country gentleman, faithful to his King without servility, attached to the people without democracy." (10)

To these men was entrusted the larger share of the local government of the mining districts. They ruled locally as justices, and they represented the interests of the mining industry nationally as members of parliament. Their fortunes were so tied to the prosperity of the industry that by acting in the interests of their own fortune they were likely to simultaneously serve the interests of others. When in 1789, amongst a "spoof" list of public houses in Parliament Square, including such examples as "The Constitution" kept by William Pitt, and the "Cicero's Head" by Edmund Burke, the Times listed the "Jolly Miners" by St. Aubyn Basset, it did not feel any need to elaborate the point in explanation to its readers. (11)

Unlike some of the northern industries, the mining industry of Cornwall did not have to struggle for a voice at Westminster. "Old Corruption", might deny a vote to the working miner, but it did provide the industry with a useful lobby. The county returned forty-four members at the close of the eighteenth century, and although much of the patronage was controlled by the Government and by patrons from outside the county, the mining interest was still well represented. Sir Francis Basset in 1792 controlled both seats at Penryn, as he did at Tregony, and one seat at Mitchell. Lord Clinton (formerly Trefusis) owned a seat at Callington, and had a considerable interest

in the mines of the Redruth district; Lord Falmouth owned two at Truro, and one at Mitchell, the Earl of Mt. Edgecumbe owned four seats, the Buller family the boroughs of East and West Looe, the Eliot family three boroughs in the east of the county, and one of the St. Ives seats was held by a Cornishman.(12) The pattern of patronage had changed by 1832, but many seats were still controlled by the Cornish gentry. (13) In this context it is not surprising that the Reform movement in the county was a movement of the smaller gentry of the eastern district against the monopolisation of interest by the mining lords and squires of the west. Miners riots were feared, but by the reformers, who were concerned that if County meetings were thrown open, the tory lords of the west would bring to them thousands of miners to protest against reform. (14)

Alongside the gentry must be considered the Anglican clergy in their social context. (Their pastoral role has been considered elsewhere). (below pp.240-6). A full social role in the structure of society was exercised not so much by the poor curates or the low-born incumbents of the poorer livings, but by that group of influential clergy, who exercised squirarcial as well as ecclesiastical functions. They shared the bench with the gentry, to whom they were often related by blood or marriage, and like the gentry were deeply involved in the mining industry. Of such men were clergy like Richard Polwhele, Polwhele of Polwhele, Vicar of Kenwyn and Kea, amongst other benefices, of a family as old as the Bassets, and the brothers Borlase, the Vicars of Ludgvan and Madron, whose livings had been purchased for them by their father John of Pendeen from a fortune made in the tin mines. Walter Borlase was for some time Vice-warden of the Stannaries Court. The father of Davies Gilbert, prominent back bencher, President of the Royal Society, and Sheriff of the county in 1793, had been a poor curate on a living of £35 p.a., but successful adventuring in the mines had enabled him to rise to the level of justice and send his son to Oxford. (15)

As justices the gentry and clergy, saw their role as a strict, but paternal one. They were "fathers of the people", but strict ones. Charity was a pallative, indeed charity was expected of them and they accepted that it should be. In return they expected deference and social discipline. Delinquency disruptive of the peace of the county, might expect to receive summary justice. Conservatism was the distinguishing mark of these men. "If I can see anything in our English History, 'tis that the poor nation is always the worse for alterations", wrote William Borlase to Sir John St. Aubyn in 1745 (16) and it was as magistrates and defenders of the social order as well as Anglicans, that the Cornish clergy gave the early ~~magistrates~~ Methodists such a rough time.

The next generation of magistrates scarcely differed. Sir Francis Basset was described in 1783 as, "a forward, presuming young man" and of "too interested and narrow a mind to wish for improvement of any kind." (17) Not only did Basset not wish for improvement, he positively reacted against it. Among his publications in the D.N.B. is listed the Crimes of Democracy (1798), and in conversation with Joseph Farrington in 1810 he referred to Edmund Burke, and said:

> "In his predictions respecting the French Revolution, he spoke and wrote in the spirit of prophecy. All he foretold has been realised, he had the largest comprehension and was the most extraordinary man of his time —— Mr. Pitt on the contrary was slow in believing that a bad spirit was rising in this country from the example set in France; but being at length persuaded of it, he was prompt and vigorous in preventing the growing effects; and by the Sedition Bill, which he brought into Parliament and carried; he saved this country." (18)

It was in Basset's home parish of Illogan that the first Cornish Branch of the Society for the Protection of Property against Republicans and Levellers was formed. (19)

As befitted, "a father of the people", Basset saw himself as pledged to set a good example to his dependents. In the evenings Farrington records he walked to the chapel of ease which he had built about a mile from his manor,

"which he makes a point to do as an example to the people." (20) It is hardly surprising that he and the other gentry of the neighbourhood were somewhat embarrassed by the conduct of Basset's kinsman Sir John St. Aubyn; not by his political conduct, the baronet's views were rigid enough, but by his moral laxity in having fifteen illegitimate children by two women, which was setting an example of a different kind to the people. (21)

The landowners of the mining districts made it a practice to grant to labouring miners small acreages of wasteland at leases of three lives, to enclose and cultivate in their leisure hours. This practice has been described elsewhere, (above pp. 96-9) but in the context of this chapter it should be emphasised that too many of the miners, the "lords" were landlords as well as mineral owners. They offered the plots in part as a cure for "idleness and extravagance" which they regarded as the root causes of the poverty of many of the working miners. This viewpoint was as characteristic of the squirarchy and clergy as it was of those members of the middle class who saw their own prosperity as a product of the converse of those vices. The Rev. William Borlase wrote to his bishop in 1766, a year of severe food shortage:

> "We hear everyday of the common people, of want of employ, of short wages, of dear provisions; there may be some reason for this, our taxes are heavy upon the necessaries of life. In one tin work near me, where most of the tinners of my parish have been employed for years, there were lately computed to have been at one time three score snuff boxes. There may be in my parish about fifty girls above fifteen years old, and I dare say forty-nine of them have scarlet cloaks. There is scarce a family in the parish, I mean of common labourers, but have tea once if not twice a day ... in short all labourers live above their condition, and can it be wondered at that wages price and hire should fall short of their wants." (22)

From this line of argument it is but a short step to the opinion of the Helston lawyer and mine adventurer Christopher Wallis, that scarcity was itself the bringer of moral improvement:

> "The scarcity of corn, and the extreme dearness of all the necessaries of life is beyond anything ever remembered or recorded ... and yet on observations in the living of the poor, I don't perceive that they have wanted more than usual ... all look healthy more than usual, I account for it on this head, that the men are not so idle as they are accustomed to be, and therefore there is more content in the family, and all the men's earnings are applied to the purchase of food and cloaths, so that I am in hopes the scarcity may be productive of much good, and the almost famine which prevails produce an amendment amongst the miners." (23)

The problem of poverty and high food prices was brought home to the gentry in several ways. As justices they were directly concerned with public order, which was more often threatened by food riots than by any other kind of disturbance. As landowners they had a direct economic interest as payers of the poor rate, and as social leaders, the dispensation of charity was one of the main props of their position. These considerations were at the back of charitable activities. Pure generosity to the needy can motivate charity, or indeed the duty to help the less fortunate can be regarded as one which naturally attaches itself to the more privileged in a society. It is not claimed that the Cornish gentry were devoid of altruistic motivation; but a philosophy which attributes poverty to the vices and failings of the poor, and which finds it so easy to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor, is altruism of a limited and conditional kind. The relief programmes which food rioting could precipitate indicate that there was nothing like fear of disorder to prick the consciences of the well-to-do, and it was surely with such knowledge that the poor rioted in the first place.

On the bench, the gentry and clergy alike knew the priorities which should be respectively attached to order and relief. Davies Gilbert remarked with evident approval of his father, the Rev. Davies Giddy's conduct during the food riots of 1773:

> "he stood foremost in recommending and enforcing vigourous measures for suppressing outrage previously to all contributions for relief."

This attitude Davies Gilbert called "enlightened firmness." (24)

If the Breage mine captain Tobais Martin is to be believed even the charity which followed the restoration of order could be selective. In his poem Clerical Charity he describes how when the Vicar of Breage's cow died, he was dissuaded from giving the flesh to his hounds as it might "infect the kennel through." Instead he sent out a messenger around the parish, announcing a free distribution of beef to the poor. Not however to the poor indiscriminately, for there was to be none for the miners of Wheal Ann who had recently:

> "In numerous bodies issued out
> And through the Country ranged about
> In quest of meat their mouths to fill."

Rather it was to go to:

> "Those quiet men, of passive mind,
> Who never with Wheal Ann men joined,
> Nor ever murmured at the rate
> Of meat or corn, but met their fate
> With stoic resolution still,
> Let farmers charge what price they will." (25)

If order was to be restored then it was to be done quickly and fearlessly. Those in positions of authority should admit to no fear of those below them. Sir Francis Basset after securing the execution of a food rioter in 1796, scorned to make himself scarce when agitation was mounting at his victim's funeral. Warned of his danger, he replied:

> "... loud enough to be heard by many of the mob
> that the danger would be with them if they acted
> improperly. No attempt was made to molest him
> and the people dispersed quietly after which
> order was generally restored." (26)

Remarking in 1810 that Cornish mines were carried on by bodies of men united for that purpose, Basset expressed the opinion that whatever they may be individually considered, such bodies of men were never liberal. (27) He was perhaps balancing in his mind, the record of himself and others like him, in charitable donations to the labouring poor, with the less impressive

record of outside adventurers.* Basset did not supply any reasons for this distinction but they can perhaps be supplied. The out-adventurers were not justices, so order was not their responsibility; they were not local landowners and so did not carry the poor rate, but above all, they had no social position to maintain dependent on the respect and deference of the labouring classes. The out-adventurers might be rich, but one does not expect largess from a group with whom one has no direct contact: one expects it as a right, almost, from those to whom one pays the deference due to a lord. William Jenkin wrote to his employer during the bad year of 1801:

> "My neighbour has just communicated to me the contents of a very polite letter from J. Buller Esq. inclosing a draft on his Bankers for £100 towards a fund for procuring corn for the poor families in this populous parish. Sir John St. Aubyn, who has but a very small estate here gave £5 5s." (28)

The implication is clear, his employer could not fail to contribute likewise if she were to maintain her influence in the parish. In the contrast between the sums given by Buller and by St. Aubyn, is another implication; the implication that charity is not a matter of spontaneous largess, but is

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*Basset's record in respect of his home parish of Illogan must be qualified before 1799, by the fact that in this parish lords' dues from the mines were not chargeable to the poor rate as they were in almost every other mining parish. Jenkin asserts that it was because of Basset's great weight, his most important mine, Cook's Kitchen, was in this parish, and liberal charitable donations, that the dues had escaped becoming chargeable, despite more than one attempt on the part of other inhabitants to alter the situation. Jenkin's own employer also had an important mining interest in Illogan, and when that employer died he wrote to the heir, stating that her uncle had considered charitable donations to be politic, since apparently to become chargeable to the poor rate would have been a heavier burden. (Jenkin Mss. to A.M. Hunt, 27th Feb. 1799).

In this respect Illogan was an exception. (Eden noted in 1797 that in the populous mining parish of Gwennap, the poor rates were much eased by the charge on the lords' dues. (Rogers ed. p. 147)). Desire to avoid this charge can not therefore be seen as a consideration relevant to charitable motivation applicable to other than this peculiar case. It ceased also to be a relevant motivation for Illogan after 1799 when that parish fell into line with the rest. (Jenkin Mss. to A.M. Hunt 4th April 1799). Jenkin may have used the argument of policy to persuade the new heir to "do something handsome" for the poor, but he was certainly no less solicitous on behalf of the poor of that parish after 1799.

proportionately related to the size of the influence which an individual held in a particular parish. This is indicated too in a letter which Henry Trethewey, steward to the Hawkins family, wrote to his employer in 1847 concerning distress relief plans at St. Hiliary:

> "Wheal Prosper is not your property neither are you at present receiving any dues of consequence, but merely on Halvana ... I do not think you can be expected to subscribe to anything more than the relief fund of the Parish which I consider they are in great want of." (29)

The same steward wrote on another occasion that he had not yet forwarded his employer's contribution to a relief fund because, he was led to believe, "that some of the landowners had not come forward on the occasion." (30)

Charity did not, of course, only take the form of subscriptions for relief in distressed times. Donations might be sought for charity schools and a host of other reasons as well as for individual cases of hardship. Essential figures in the management of charity where the estate stewards, the gentry's agents in direct contact with the labouring poor. The gentry of the mining districts did not deal directly with their tenants and with the employees in the mines, but operated through the medium of these stewards. Accordingly these men possessed considerable status in the mining regions. From the letterbooks of one such man which survive, a fair idea of the role of such a man can be obtained. William Jenkin was constantly pressing his employer to make donations for charity schools, for food subscriptions or for individual hardship cases. He informed his employer where charity was deserved, and at times, where it was expected. He urged leniency when tenants leases fell in and they had difficulty in affording a renewal. He tried to impress on landholders the delightful moral consequences which would arise from granting small plots of land to labouring miners. The following extract is an example of the kind of letter which he had frequently to send to his employer:

> "There was a poor man unfortunately killed by accident in Herland Mine, by the ground falling in upon him, about two weeks back. He has left a widow and several small children. The man bore a good character. Robert Hoblyn Esq. a neighbouring gentleman, and one of the Lords of that mine, was so kind as to send the poor woman a guinea. I took the liberty of doing the like on thy behalf." (31)

Two other letters from Jenkin are interesting on the matter of a local expectation of charity from the mineral lords. The first to George Hunt in 1798 reminds him of "some little assistance to the poor families in Illogan", which he had given the previous year, and continues:

> "Be pleased to excuse me for mentioning it now —— The poor creatures are enquiring whether anything of that sort is to be hoped for this year." (32)

The second written to A.M. Hunt, the niece of George Hunt who succeeded to his estate in 1799, reveals just how much local initiative in charitable distribution was left to the steward:

> "I have taken the liberty of using thy name and money to the amount of £12 or £14 in the course of last year, in relieving some unfortunate families, some of whose husbands or near relations have either been killed or hurted in Tin Croft, and other of thy mines. I did not take the liberty of troubling thee with these little matters, as they arose, but as I used to do in thy Uncle's time charge it in one sum at the end of the year." (33)

The letterbooks of Henry Trethewey, steward to the Hawkins family, contain similar letters, for example the one written to his employer in 1843:

> "A subscription of Two Guineas has generally been given to the Poor of Probus and the like sum at Grampound for purchasing coals, and in the present instance, if it be your wish to give £5 had it not better be divided between them. I have named this for your consideration previous to paying Mr. Lampen's curate, as the poor of Grampound in consequence of living in your houses and your paying a large proportion of the Poor's Rates consider they have similar claims on you to those of Probus." (34)

Jenkin was clearly indicating the important role of the steward when he wrote to his employer in 1812, a year of distress, that one of the lords was a liberal, humane man who, "may do something handsome, when his steward shall

think fit to write him." (35) A letter in the Cornwall Gazette in 1841 gives the following account of the character of the steward of the Basset estate:

> "... the venerable steward of Lady Basset, a gentleman, who for fifty years has proved himself the constant friend of the tenantry, as well as of the miners and labourers ... while besides most zealously carrying into effect the benevolent designs of his noble patrons, he has been careful to bring under their consideration every case, in which they might, with advantage to deserving persons, or with benefit to the neighbourhood, gratify the first desire of their hearts — the desire to do good." (36)

Charitable donation was not the only way in which the gentry were expected to exhibit a degree of social responsibility towards the labourers in the mines from which their fortunes came. During the depression years of copper mining in the 1780's, the out-adventurers, including at this time the well known industrialists, Boulton, Watt, Wedgewood and Wilkinson, wished to close down mines which were losing money. They found themselves opposed by the lords, who preferred, in Boulton's words, "to sink their money in employing the poor as to maintain them without working."* (37) The lords were prepared to give up their dues, and resented Boulton and Watt's reluctance to do likewise with their engine premiums. The two following letters from Trethewey, the first written in 1842 and the second in 1854, illustrate this expectation that the lords would give up their dues, or even take shares in a losing concern rather than let a mine closure bring disaster to the poor of the neighbourhood:

> "the Adventurers are minus a considerable sum and without doubt it will be your interest to grant them their request (to give up his dues) as should the mines stop, it will be ruinous to many of the inhabitants in that neighbourhood, the greater part of whom are your tenants." (38)

> "As this mine is of such great importance to the neighbourhood, and in all probability may never work again ... I am induced to write to ask you to re-consider the matter, whether it may not be for your interest to take a few shares, rather than suffer the mine to be stopped." (39

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*See above p. 183

In all directions the effect of charity was to weave a web of dependence and deference which was as much the cement of the social system as patronage was of the political system. But if it was a social regime of charity and order, it was also a regime of ceremony. The socially elevated had to be seen to be such. Perhaps to some extent, grand bearing and behaviour with all the nuances of authority were acceptable to the poor as a transference of their own unrealisable ambitions to the person of another. In many ways the gentry sought to identify their tenants and dependents with their families. They provided largess and ceremony on family occasions, such as weddings and births, coming of age parties etc. At the conclusion of a successful lawsuit with the Basset family, the Lanhyrock family provided all the labourers at one mine with a mug of ale which they drank at a neighbouring ale house and "huzzaed on the occasion." (40) The families patronised the leisure activities of the poor; in the eighteenth century they had promoted wrestling and hurling matches (below pp. 306 7) and in the nineteenth century they became the patrons of cottage garden societies and similar more "rewarding" activities.

The greatest occasions for ceremony, however were the funerals of the great families. Lord de Dunstanville and Sir John St. Aubyn died in the eighteen thirties neither leaving male heirs. It was these two men, whom the Times had satirically listed under the single name "St. Aubyn Basset" in 1789, who had been the most powerful men in the mining districts for almost half a century. Perhaps in the grandeur of their funeral ceremonies, the mourners sensed they were burying something more than two individuals. They were burying the apogee of a social system. The period of mourning would be a long one, respect for the dead would give illusions of comparable power and influence for decades to come, but if there is a turning point in Cornish social history at this time, it is perhaps best symbolised by the burial of Sir John St. Aubyn in 1839, and of his kinsman Lord de Dunstanville four years earlier.

Francis Basset of Tehidy had been knighted in 1779, for his services in leading a body of 600 tinners to assist in the defence of Plymouth in the event of a French invasion. Created a peer in 1796, he took the title Baron de Dunstanville. In 1835, fifty-five years after he had first entered Parliament as member for Penryn, he died in London and was taken back to Illogan for burial. About 10,000 people attended his funeral procession. (41) But the largest ceremony was yet to come. In the early summer of the following year, the foundation stone of the De Dunstanville memorial was laid on Carn Brea, a hill overlooking the town of Redruth. The West Briton reported the proceedings:

> "Monday last was the day appointed for laying the foundation stone of the de Dunstanville Monument to be raised on Carn Brea, to commemorate the virtues of the late lamented Lord de Dunstanville. One o'clock was the hour named, but as early as nine persons began to assemble on the hill ... About twelve o'clock from ten to twelve hundred miners from North and South Roskear, each decorated with Mr. Pendarves colours arrived on the ground in procession, preceeded by the captains and agents of these mines, and were so stationed as to keep a spacious and clear road for the convenience of the Masonic gentlemen and members of the committee who were to perform the ceremony of laying the stone. This was a very necessary precaution for by one o'clock, and a considerable time before the arrival of the procession, full ten thousand persons had assembled on the hill and every rock and elevation from which a glimpse of the ceremony could be obtained was covered with people." (42)

The ceremony over, the rest of the day, for it was a holiday in Redruth, with all the shops closed and the mines idle, seems to have been enjoyed by the miners in wrestling tournaments.

Sir John St. Aubyn, kinsman to Sir Francis, and second only to him in terms of influence in the mining districts, also died in London. His body reached his Cornish seat of Clowance on the 26th August 1839. From then until his burial on the 29th, the coffin lay in state:

> "attended by twelve boys from the free school in crepe scarfs, eight poor men in cloaks standing bareheaded; eight male servants in

> crepe bands; twelve girls from the Free School in crepe sashes and bows; seven female servants in hoods and scarves; and two mutes."

The funeral itself on the 29th was a very grand affair:

> "the people from the neighbouring towns began to assemble at Clowance from an early hour. The gates of the park were thrown open, and everyone who obtained admission to the house was treated with refreshments. Before the hour arrived at which the funeral was timed to start, a double line of spectators, twenty thousand or thirty thousand in number had formed up along the road between the house and Crowan Church. Through the midst of this assembled multitude the procession made its solemn way. First came the master of the Free School followed by a hundred boys, and the mistress of the same with fifty girls, all appropriately dressed for the occasion in the complimentary mourning provided by the family. Following there walked a hundred members of the Order of Free Masons ... then came a hundred tenants wearing silk hatbands and gloves, an undertaker, two mutes, and thirty poor widows, the latter in black gowns, hoods and scarves. Before the body which rested on a car compelled by tenantry, walked the officiating clergyman and two leading mourners, whilst behind it in their respective order came thirty relatives, a hundred clergy and gentlemen, twenty five servants and finally a hundred and fifty more tenants in hat bands and gloves." (43)

One area in which charity and ceremony were used to some effect by the gentry to obtain the support of the poor was that of law suits. The rise of the copper industry meant that much land previously disregarded as worthless, came to possess valuable mineral deposits. Title to such land had often become vague after years of unconcern to establish it. Consequently law suits were often waged between rival claimants to mineral rights. Success depended a great deal on the evidence of witnesses, many of whom were poor people who found that their evidence usefully directed charity in their direction. Jenkin wrote to his employer in 1801 about two paupers whose evidence was expected to be useful to the family in a dispute:

> "I wish the dispute ... could be tried soon, for I fear that John Merren and John Morrish will both be dead in less than twelve months. I am endeavouring to keep them both up as well as I can." (44)

A few weeks later he wrote again requesting aid for clothing for some witnesses who were "so wretchedly poor as to stand in need of a few garments, without which they will scarcely be fit to appear before the Court." (45) He also appealed on behalf of a poor miner who had been a good witness in a past dispute, and would prove a useful one in a present dispute. The man was now too ill to continue working in the mines. His relief was especially an obligation on the family he had assisted, for he had been refused parish relief by an overseer who was related to the steward employed by the rival faction in the dispute. He had been scoffingly asked "Why don't you go into Redruth to the Quaker Jenkin for relief?" (46)

Another witness, it was feared by Jenkin, would rather offend the "God of Truth" than incur the displeasure of the steward of the Bassets who "acts as an imperious Nabob within the district." He had heard terrifying stories of what happened in Basset territory to witnesses who appeared for the other side. (47)

The successful side showed its pleasure not only in charity, but also in ceremony:

> "I hear nothing on the side of our honourable, noble, generous opponents but hussaing and shouting, and their grand display of ribbons. As they passed through Redruth they drew the admiration of multitudes of women and children --- Horses and asses decorated with the Ensigns of Victory." (47)

Jenkin was perhaps expressing the sour reaction of the loser. He had not been above initiating free beer and cheer himself when on the winning side, (above p.207) although he had warned his employer against paying for the ringing of Illogan church bells in celebration on the grounds that it would be, "subjecting the poor ringers to the malice of insolent, revengeful Tyranny", meaning the displeasure of the Basset influence which this time had lost. (48)

Also part of the structure of society in the mining villages were the mine captains. Their position in the mine itself has been described above (p.71-4)

As determiners of employment, and to some extent of wages too, their influence was bound to be considerable outside the mine as well. As the very fact of their promotion suggests they tended to be men of intelligence and ability which made them stand out from their fellows. In any case they were persons whom the working miner would be very foolish indeed to offend. They were treated with respect in the villages, the term "Captain" is still used as a form of polite address in some parts of the county. There is very little information on the social role of the captains. They were only comparatively well off, and could not afford to distribute largess on any noticeable scale. They do appear as trustees of Methodist chapels and as local preachers and class leaders in numbers disproportinate to their number in the overall population. (49)

There were tradesmen and farmers in the villages, and where the geographical situation determined it, fishermen and sailors. (At St. Ives the miners and fishermen lived in quite distinct parts of the town, and not always in perfect harmony). Shopkeepers, inn keepers and blacksmiths were perhaps in closer contact with the miners than most commercial operators. The credit offering shopkeeper was virtually a necessity with miners' incomes so variable, and the blacksmith's shop, to which frequent resort was demanded by the need to sharpen tools, often became a local meeting place for the men "off core." (50)

Whether lords, stewards, captains or tradesmen, these men all had one thing in common, their prosperity depended on the mine, and ultimately on the labour of the working miner, as William Jenkin pointed out to his employer in 1795:

> "I hope it will not be displeasing to thee, that I continue to solicit the favour of thy permission to drop in a little of thy bounty towards relieving the poor inhabitants of a neighbourhood wherein thou hast considerable property —— and whose great fortune is likely to be considerably augmented by some mines wrought by the labour of some of these very poor people." (51)

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METHODISM AND THE MINING COMMUNITY

The Eighteenth Century

The formative years of Cornish Methodism are inseparably tied with the visits of the Wesleys to the county. John Wesley visited it no less than 32 times from 1743 to 1789, Charles Wesley three times, in 1743, 1744, and 1756. Both brothers concentrated their activities on the western mining regions.*

Charles came first in 1743, having been invited by a Mr. Shepherd who had already been some time working at St. Ives. (1) On his way to that town, he met two tinners who, "wished him good luck in the name of the Lord." (2) The meeting was prophetic, for the Wesleys were to capture large audiences of tinners. Only three days after his arrival, Charles Wesley records that he preached at Kenegie Downs to "near a thousand tinners", and on the following day at Pool in "the heart of the tinners." (3) At the mining village of Zennor his audience numbered some hundreds, (4) and on his first visit to Gwennap, he preached to "near two thousand hungry souls." (5) At St. Hilary his congregation numbered near a thousand, (6) at Morvah he, "invited the whole nation of tinners to Christ", (7) and at St. Just, "a town of tinners", about two thousand attended his preaching. (8) Returning to Gwennap, carrying with him the tinners from Pool, where he had stopped to preach on the way, he saw, "such a company assembled as I have not seen, excepting some few times at Kennington." (9)

Some weeks later in 1743, John Wesley made his first visit, and he also preached to large assemblages of miners. At Illogan he claimed two or three hundred tinners, at Gwennap five hundred, at Zennor two or three hundred, and at St. Just a thousand. (10) At Morvah he found the largest congregation he had yet seen in Cornwall, (11) and at Treswithin Downs claimed an audience of

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*If the five most visited places by John Wesley in East and West Cornwall respectively are listed the following result is obtained:

East Cornwall: Launceston 22 times, Camelford 20, Port Isaac 17, St. Austell 14, and Liskeard 6.

West Cornwall: St. Ives 43, St. Just 35, Gwennap 35, Redruth 33, and St. Agnes 20.

two or three thousand. Returning to Gwennap he found, "the plain covered from end to end. It was supposed there were ten thousand people." (12) There he was awakened at night by a company of tinners, who, fearing they should be too late for the preaching, had gathered around the house in which he was staying. (13)

He returned in the following spring and met with similar successes --- at Gwennap, "almost an innumerable multitude, before behind and on either hand", (14) and at Stithians, "some thousands." (15) Charles Wesley following in the summer, preached at Gwennap to near a thousand, and at Crowan to between one and two thousands. (16)

In 1745, John Wesley made his third visit with large congregations at Sithney and St. Just, (17) and Charles Wesley a year later preached to over five thousand at Gwennap, and over a thousand at Sithney; to a "huge multitude" at Wendron, and on a final visit to Gwennap, to "nine or ten thousand by computation." (18) In the autumn of the same year, John Wesley preached at Gwennap to "an immense multitude", (19) and in 1747 to a large congregation at Truro, and to a large one at Redruth, of which town he says:

> "There are scarce any in the town, but gentlemen,
> who are not convinced of the truth." (20)

At St. Agnes he addressed a large crowd, and at Brea, "neither the house nor the yard would contain the congregation." (21)

It is important to keep these large crowds of hearers on the Wesleys' early visits in mind, for only when it is realised just how many hearers, (even allowing for exaggeration) they found among the miners of west Cornwall, can the opposition which they encountered be put into its proper perspective. The crowds of miners who opposed him were small when set against the numbers which came to hear John Wesley.

From the journals of the Wesleys it is possible to extract a few figures for individual methodist society membership. The dates of the figures are given in brackets, and J. signifies that the figure was obtained from

John Wesley's journal, C. that his brother was the source.

At Morvah (1743 C.) the names of several people wishing to join the society were taken. Later in the same year the membership at Trewellard was said to be about a hundred (1743 J.). At St, Just 50 or 60 (1746 C.), at the same place 150 (1748 J.) and at St. Agnes 98 (1760 J.).

From 1768, figures are obtainable from the Conference Minutes for the society membership in the county. To 1785, the county was divided into two circuits, East and West. From 1786 figures are given for two western circuits, Redruth and St. Ives, and an eastern circuit now called St. Austell. In 1792 the circuit previously known as St. Ives was renamed the Penzance Circuit. I have added from 1786, the Redruth and St. Ives figures together, and from 1792, the Redruth and Penzance circuits, in order to arrive at aggregate figures for the western part of Cornwall. These figures are given in the table following this page.

A casual glance is sufficient to show how wildly membership figures fluctuated from year to year. Membership of the western societies more than trebled from 1768 to 1798 but it was an increase which reflected a net rather than a constant gain. Thus an impressive increase from 1495 in 1768 to 1927 in 1771, was followed by a period of decline. Membership in 1772 was 1814, and it was only at this level again in 1882, when it was 1813. In the intervening decade there were several years which saw a slight increase in membership over the preceding year, but overall the picture was of decline. The most disasterous decrease was from 1814 in 1772 to 1421 in 1773, and the low point was in 1780 when membership was 1334.

WESLEYAN SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP IN CORNWALL 1768 TO 1798

	Eastern Circuits	Western Circuits
1768	543	1,495
1769	630	1,600
1770	602	1,709
1771	570	1,927
1772	639	1,814
1773	573	1,421
1774	660	1,482
1775	769	1,380
1776	760	1,390
1777	No figures are given	
1778	718	1,430
1779	718	1,412
1780	637	1,334
1781	613	1,538
1782	756	1,813
1783	496	2,047
1784	650	2,393
1785	757	2,578
1786	816	2,692
1787	820	2,907
1788	818	3,007
1789	785	3,179
1790	762	3,231
1791	950	3,242
1792	-	3,200
1793	1,020	2,808
1794	955	3,057
1795	920	3,250
1796	770	3,933
1797	870	4,318
1798	1,060	4,637

From the low point of 1780, an increase period began. Over the first quinquennium of the 1780's membership rose from 1,334 to reach 2,578 by 1785. By 1786, the 1780 membership had doubled. In five successive years percentage increases in the region of 15, 17, 12, 12 and 7% had been achieved. Thereafter, although there was a decline in the early 1790's, including a drop from 3,200 to 2,808 from 1792 to 1793, an impressive growth period followed including the spectacular increase over the three years from 1793 to 1798 from 2,808 to 4,637.

These figures are for society membership, and although the Wesleys were clearly obtaining large audiences of tinners from their first visits, we have no way of quantifying their appeal. Methodist influence was clearly much wider than society membership figures can indicate. The societies were select groups of tried and tested Methodists. The tests both for entering them and remaining in them were very rigid. While society membership might remain the aim of the most convinced and sincere Methodists, there must have been many persons, who though regular attenders at preaching, and staunch supporters of Wesley, had no ambition to enter the society.

The Curate at Redruth in 1747, wrote to the Bishop of Exeter, emphasising that there were two sorts of Methodists:

> "Those that have given in their names and belong to some society and constantly attend all their meetings; and those that attend only sometimes without regularly belonging to them.
>
> Of the latter sort some, I know, walk very orderly and uprightly but thro' the influence of friends, or perhaps some objection to the irregularity of their preaching and meetings will not join their names to them tho' they are united in heart and affection. But others tho' they like to hear them and have made some improvements, yet as their change is but partial, whatever irregularities of conduct they are guilty of, are charged upon the Methodists in general tho' they disown they belong to them." (22)

Charles Wesley writes of Gwennap in 1744:

> "I preached at Gwennap where the awakening is general. Very many who have not courage to enter into the Society, have yet broke off their sins by repentance, and are waiting for forgiveness."* (23)

The distinction is an important one. Until 1851 there is no measurement of Methodist attenders as opposed to society members. From existing statistics it is therefore easy to underestimate Methodist influence.

There were two major factors behind the success of Methodism: the appeal of the simple doctrines to labouring people, and the high degree of organisation which characterised the movement. It has been said above that Methodist membership and Methodist adherents were quantifiably two very different things. But nevertheless the permanency of the influence depended upon the successful organisation of the membership. One class member in a family might colour the outlook of the family as an entity; one member in a work group could affect the responses of a circle of working men; and one zealous neighbour could by example influence a neighbourhood. But without a permanent basis of convinced dedicated people, then the Wesleyan influence would have been temporary. In his absence John Wesley would have been forgotten.

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*Paul Burall described how in the 1760's he was a staunch Methodist without aspiring to society membership:

> "And this 8 years, I folied the preaching and Meetings of the Methides, and Cep up privat prayr. And sometimes in theas Upertuty (sic) I found it good to wait on the Lord, and allwais afraide to put my name Among thea, for fear I went Astray, for fear I should bring a bad name on the good Coase, for I enjoid every priviledge Among them; and thear rested sining and Repenting." (P. Burall, Cornwall to America in 1783 (1932) p. 5)

See also the comment of Samuel Drew (b. 1765):

> "Though I had been in the habit of attending the Methodist chapel, and, as far as religion occupied my thoughts, was an Arminian in sentiment, yet I had very little serious feeling, and no intention of joining the Methodist body." (J.H. Drew, Samuel Drew M.A. The Self-taught Cornishman (1861) p. 58)

The movement was highly organised from John Wesley at the top, through stages of delegation to the society member at the bottom. Below Wesley came the itinerant preachers, referred to in the Conference Minutes, as the Helpers. They were laymen, there were no ordained Methodist ministers until 1831. They were allocated to the various societies for short periods, and their duties were specified at the Conference of 1763:

> "Q. What is the office of an Helper?
> A. 1. To expound every morning and evening
> 2. To meet the United Society, and the Penitents every week
> 3. To visit the Classes once a quarter
> 4. To hear and decide all differences
> 5. To receive on trial, for the society and Bands, and to put the disorderly back on trial
> 6. To see the Stewards, the Leaders, and the Schoolmasters faithfully discharge their several offices
> 7. To meet the leaders of the Bands and Classes weekly, and the Stewards, and to overlook their accounts." (24)

One of the itinerants in each circuit, known as the Assistant, was given overall responsibility for the circuit.

John Wesley in practice delegated responsibility badly. His autocratic temperament and his ability to grasp the minutest detail of business, lend justification to the view of those who dubbed him, 'Pope John'. As the founder of the movement he regarded himself as its father, and as such he expected absolute and final control. It is to some extent his own fault that he found the fortunes of a circuit often deteriorated if he were too long absent from it. Thus in 1760 we find him writing:

> "I am now entering into Cornwall which I have not visited these three years, and consequently all things in it are out of order. Several persons talk of sharing my burthen but none does it." (25)

It is not perhaps surprising that he found his assistants and helpers reluctant to act on their own authority. "You that are upon the spot are the best judges concerning William Ellis. I refer it wholly to you whether he should preach or no." he wrote to his itinerant at St. Austell, but qualified

it by adding, "till I come into Cornwall myself." (26)

Wesley's attention to detail can be seen in a letter which he wrote to Thomas Rankin, his itinerant at Redruth, in 1765:

> "There is a good work in Cornwall. But where the good work goes on well, we should take care to be exact in little things.
>
> I will tell you several of these, just as they occur to my mind. Grace Paddy at Redruth, met in the Select Society, though she wore a large glittering necklace, and met no band.
>
> They sing all over Cornwall a tune so full of repititions and flourishes, that it can scarce be sung with devotion. It is to these words, ---
>
> 'Praise the Lord, ye blessed ones'
>
> They cannot sing our old common tunes. Teach these everywhere. Take pains herein.
>
> The societies are not half supplied with books; not even with Jane Cooper's letters, or the two or three sermons which I printed last year. No not with the shilling Hymn Book, or Primitive Physic.
>
> The preaching-houses are miserable, even the new ones. They have neither light nor air sufficient, and they are far, far too low and too small. Look at Yarm house.
>
> We have need to use all the common sense God has given us as well as all the grace ...
>
> Recommend the Notes on the Old Testament in good earnest. Every society, as a society should subscribe. Remind them, everywhere that two, four or six might join together for a copy. And bring the money to their leader weekly." (27)

The helpers came from the ranks of the local preachers, known in the early years of the movement as "exhorters." They began under the probation of the Assistant, and none could exhort in any of the societies without a note of recommendation from him, which had to be renewed annually. (28) Many of the exhorters had no wish to be other than local preachers, but those who were destined for helper status, had to serve a probationary period as an exhorter for twelve months, a period which was extended to four years in 1784. (29)

The societies were sub-divided into classes, ideally of around fifteen to twenty members, but frequently much larger. This was a procedure which enabled the organisation to preserve regularity of meeting in the outlying hamlets and villages which were not in themselves sufficiently populous to

support whole societies. As membership increased, the normal pattern for Methodist growth was for growing classes to become new societies. Thus the Mousehole society was originally a class of the Newlyn society. In the following list of the classes in the Tuckingmill Society in 1799, those underlined later became independent societies:

Tuckingmill itself two classes	196	members
Roscruggan	25	
Illogan	43	
Condurrow	24	
Illogan Downs	52	
Lower Merose Vean	11	
Illogan Highway	22	
Tolvaddon Downs	13	
Pengegon	31	
Pool	18	
Total:	435	(30)

This was a logical pattern of growth. The classes generally became separate societies at the time of a revival. This process of expanding by sub-division continued well into the nineteenth century. Each society would have a chapel or preaching house, class meetings would be generally held in private houses. Such a growth pattern had its disadvantages. Classes were often turned into Societies at a peak of temporary enthusiasm, and large empty chapels testified to unsubstantiated optimism, or the local failure of mining operations.

The classes were in the charge of class leaders, perhaps the most important figures in local Methodism, though lacking the financial and administrative responsibilities of the stewards and trustees, and the colour and wider ranging influence of the local preachers. They came from all walks of life, but with a tendency to come from the upper ranks of the working class. Mine captains and shoemakers were more common than labouring miners, in proportion to their numbers in the population, but many miners were class leaders. These men had the immediate responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the class members. They were not left entirely to their own devices. They were visited once a quarter by the itinerant who dealt with matters of dismissal and admission. During his lifetime, the society members were regularly examined by John Wesley himself, who also attended the meetings of the

stewards when he was in the county. (31)

Wesley inquired into the spiritual welfare of the members individually, as the following extract from his journal indicates:

> "I walked to Besore and preached at five. Afterwards I spoke to each member of the society." (32)

At St. Agnes in 1760 he spoke to the 98 society members, and was grieved to find, "all but three or four had forsaken the Lord's Table. I told them my thoughts very plain. They seemed convinced and promised no more to give place to the Devil." (33) When examining the society at St. Ives in 1753, he found to his horror that nearly all the members bought or sold smuggled goods. (34)

These examples serve to illustrate the degree of personal supervision which John Wesley was accustomed to exercise. Charles Wesley exercised a similar degree. At Gwennap in 1746 he records, "Upon examination of each separately, I found the Society in a prosperous way." (35) Two years previously he had spoken, "to each of the Society, as their state required." (36)

The aggregate society membership figures disguise considerable fluctuations within the individual societies. Growth was not a simple matter of a percentage increase, nor decline a simple matter of percentage decrease. In a particular society, a percentage increase over a twelve month period would represent a net gain of, say, ten members. The actual situation might have been the adding of fifteen new members, and the subtraction of five old ones.

Within the circuits, individual societies grew or declined at different rates. John Wesley records in his journal in 1757:

> "I preached at six to a numerous congregation in Ludgvan. Some years since when there was a flourishing society in Gulval (the parish adjoining), there was none at all here. But how is the scene changed! In Gulval not one class, not one member, remains. In Ludgvan there is a lively society!" (37)

Within individual societies, obvious changes occur in membership with the death of old members and the joining of second generation adherents.

Thus John Wesley reports of St. Just in 1778:

> "Very few of our old society are now left; the far greater part of them are in Abraham's bosom. But the new generation are of the same spirit; serious, earnest, devoted to God, and particularly remarkable for simplicity and Christian sincerity." (38)

Apart from this, which we might term natural personnel change, there were still wide fluctuations in the composition of the societies. Some members left of their own volition, others left after being subjected to outside pressures. Early in his career John Wesley inquired into the motives of seventy-six persons, who in the course of three months had withdrawn from one of his societies in the north of England. This seems to be a typical cross-section such as might have been drawn up for any part of the country.

Fourteen left because unless they did so, their ministers would not give them the sacrament. These were chiefly dissenters, (there were few dissenters in Cornwall). Nine because their husbands or wives were opposed to their staying in. Twelve because their parents were not willing and five because their master and mistress were not willing to let them stay. Seven because people said such bad things of the society. Nine because they would not be laughed at. Three left because they would lose the poor's allowance. Three more because they could not spare the time to come, two because it was too far off, one because she was afraid of falling into fits, two because a certain Thomas Naisbit was in the society, one because the Methodists were mere Church of England men, and one because it was time enough to serve God yet. (39)

Marriage was obviously an important factor. It could mean an addition to the society, but more often it meant the reverse. It was against this danger that the stern warnings against unions with the ungodly must be seen. At the conference of 1763, the question was asked: Do we observe any evil which has lately prevailed amongst our Societies? The answer was:

> "Many of our members have lately married with unbelievers, even such as were wholly unawakened. And this has been attended with fatal consequence;

> few of these have gained the unbelieving wife or husband. Generally speaking they have themselves either had a heavy cross for life, or entirely fallen back into the world." (40)

A female 'backslider' in West Cornwall was described by a society member in the following manner:

> "I don't think she's anything better or worse than the general run of women; I have known her all my lifetime; she was a professor for years; we used to meet in the same class till she got married, when she left off, because she couldn't afford then, with a family coming quick, to pay class money, every week, ticket money and preacher's money every quarter, and to give to all the collections, as it is expected of members, however poor they may be, it was busy all to make both ends meet. No more could she then spare time to go to preaching, or other means of grace, every night in the week like she did in her courting days." (41)

Others however, left neither of their own volition, or under outside pressure, but were expelled from the societies, either by Wesley, his brother, or by the assistant. The curate at Redruth observed in 1747:

> "If any among them are guilty of slips none are more ready to observe it than themselves, and unless they are indeed very earnest penitents, they are immediately turned out of the society, for I observe they are much readier to cast out than to receive in." (42)

Expulsion might be motivated by a variety of causes, from inability to live up to the high standards of piety and religious devotion, through moral lapses of greater or lesser magnitude, to theological differences.*

At the same time as he inquired in the motives of those who left the northern society, Wesley also inquired into the reasons for the expulsion of sixty-four members. Two were expelled for cursing and swearing, two for habitual Sabbath breaking, seventeen for drunkenness, two for retailing spiritous liquors, three for habitual and wilful lying, four for railing and evil speaking, one for idleness and laziness, and twenty-nine for lightness and carelessness. (43)

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*The strongly Arminian Wesleyans were especially on their guard against the intrusion of Calvinist predestinarian ideas.

Wesley's journal provides plentiful indications of this kind of personnel fluctuation. In 1750 he wrote:

> "Through all Cornwall, I find the societies have suffered great loss from want of discipline. Wisely said the ancients, 'The soul and body make a man; the Spirit and discipline make a Christian'." (44)

Charles Wesley wrote in 1746, that he, "left two or three of a doubtful character out of the Society at St. Ives, not daring to trust them with the honour of God and his people." (45)

Directly relevant also to considerations of the membership composition of the societies, are the occasions on which John Wesley records re-joining old members to the societies. At Morvah in 1751, he noticed many backsliders amongst his congregation. (46) At Camberne in 1757, "Several who had left the society for some years came after the sermon, and desired to be readmitted." (47) At Gwennap in the 1760, he met one James Roberts, a tinner of St. Ives:

> "He was one of the first in society at St. Ives, but soon relapsed into his old sin, drunkenness, and wallowed in it for two years, during which time he headed the mob who pulled down the preaching house."

Roberts was now back in the society and relating at a love feast "how God had dealt with his soul." (48) In the same year at St. Just, ten or eleven backsliders were rejoined. (49) In 1768 at Redruth, "God gave a loud call to the backsliders." This call was greatly needed, for the itinerant, Thomas Rankin had left between three and four hundred members in the society at the close of the previous year, and Wesley found only a hundred and ten. (50)

Even if not subsequently rejoined to the society, not all former members must be regarded as being lost to Methodist influence. Few of those who left of their own volition, and not all those who were expelled, (e.g. those who were expelled for lightness and carelessness) had definite points of grievance with the Methodist body. Many remained staunch adherents, although unable to

meet the exacting requirements of society membership. Others, less zealous, still retained much of their characteristic Methodist outlook and patterns of behaviour. There was, then, not only an inner core of society members, but an outer circle of influenced people who never aspired to society membership, and a middle circle of persons who had at one time or other been members of the society, some of whom were to subsequently rejoin the society. Outside of these circles of adherents, was a still larger circle of occasional attenders.

It has been mentioned above that the exhorters, the forerunners of the local preachers, were the source of supply for the itinerants. Of course not all exhorters wanted to rise to this rank. Others were tied by family and occupation to the local societies, even had they desired to become itinerants.

Exhorters figure prominently in the journals of the Wesleys from the early days of the movement. John Wesley was stringent in the standards he expected from exhorters, none could preach without the approval of the assistant. His brother saw the usefulness of these men in 1746, but anxiously prescribed bounds beyond which they should not pass:

> "Both sheep and shepherds had been scattered in the late cloudy days of persecution, but the Lord gathered them again, and kept them together by their own brethren; who began to exhort their companions, one or more in every society. No less than four have sprung up in Gwennap. I talked closely with each, and find no reason to doubt their having been with God thus far. I advised and charged them not to stretch themselves beyond their line, by speaking out of the Society, or fancying themselves public teachers. If they keep within their bounds as they promise, they may be useful in the church: and I would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets like these." (51)

Initially the exhorters were not created by the Wesleys, but sprang up naturally in the societies, and were accepted by the Wesleys who saw their usefulness, but had misgivings about their possible limitations. Not all the exhorters whom Charles Wesley came across in 1756 pleased him as much

as those at Gwennap. At Zennor he talked to a young exhorter, and advised him "to practice, before he preached the Gospel." (52) At St. Just he found that the people had, "wandered into bypaths of error and sin, and had been confirmed therein by their covetous, proud exhorter." (53) At Trewellard he approved of the exhorter who appeared, "a solid, humble Christian, raised up to stand in the gap, and keep the trembling sheep together", (54) but returning to Zennor he found it necessary to "silence" one of their exhorters. (55)

John Wesley mentions one John O——n, a tinner preaching in 1746, (56) and at the Quarterly meeting of the stewards in 1747, he made a detailed inquiry into the Cornish exhorters:

> "I now diligently inquired what exhorters there were in each society; whether they had gifts meet for the work; whether their lives were eminently holy; and whether there appeared any fruit of their labour. I found, upon the whole: (1) That there were no less than eighteen exhorters in the county (2) That three of these had no gifts at all for the work, neither natural nor supernatural. (3) That a fourth had neither gifts nor grace; but was a dull, empty, self-conceited man. (4) That a fifth had considerable gifts, but had evidently made shipwreck of the grace of God. These therefore I determined to set aside, and advise our societies not to hear them. (5) That J.B., A.L., and J.W., had gifts and grace, and had been much blessed in the work. Lastly that the rest might be helpful when there was no preacher in their own or the neighbouring societies, provided they would take no step without the advice of those who had more experience than themselves." (57)

Ten years later at St. Agnes, Wesley listened to one I—— T—— in amazement, concluding that, "few men of learning write so correctly as an unlearned tinner speaks extempore." (58) This was high praise indeed when one keeps in mind the standards which he demanded.

References to the local preachers of the early years are hard to come by outside the journals of the Wesleys. However two of the Cornishmen who became itinerants were joined to the societies under the influence of local preachers. Peter Jaco, a fisherman of Newlyn, was converted in 1746:

"going one Sunday night to hear Stephen Nichols,
a plain honest tinner, the word took strange
hold on me, and seemed like fire in my bones." (59)

Richard Rodda, the miner from Sancreed who became a leading itinerant, was similarly converted in 1756, under the preaching of a tinner. (60)

The first half of the nineteenth century was the great age of the local preacher. During his lifetime John Wesley's supervision restricted to some extent the freedom of the uneducated preacher. After his death there was greater license, and more eccentric characters emerged. In the early years the preachers sprang up within societies and were hardly encouraged by Wesley to extend their field beyond their local societies. Towards the end of the eighteenth century they were already being planned, provided with a regular time-table over whole circuits. The earliest Cornish preachers' plan still surviving is one for the St. Ives circuit for 1791. (61) The practice of regularly planning the preachers, most probably predates this by some ten or twenty years.

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Opposition to Methodism in West Cornwall

The early Methodists encountered considerable opposition in Cornwall. Their main opponents, not unexpectedly, were the Anglican clergy, but they were opposed by individuals rather than by the established clergy as a whole, for some clergymen were sympathetic. (1) Many of the gentry too, were opposed to the Methodists, seeing in them a threat to the established village social structure in which the squirarchy and the established clergy were the traditional pillars of authority.

It is more difficult to estimate the depth of popular opposition. The Wesleys were certainly faced with angry mobs, as were the itinerants and early society members. It is difficult to establish any particular anti-Wesleyan riot as entirely spontaneous lower class action. In the cases which I have examined, there is at least a suggestion of gentry or clergy instigation, if not participation.*

Although it is only to be expected that fierce opposition would be concentrated in the early years, when Wesleyanism represented something new and unknown, there was a specific context to the intensity of much of the opposition in 1743-1745. The opening of the Wesley's work in Cornwall was unintentionally and unfortunately ill-timed. These were the years preceding the Pretender's invasion, and the early visits coincided with a period of tension which was especially strong in a county with a long Channel coast. Cornwall had been largely Royalist in the Civil War, and was suspect. In 1715, several well known Cornish gentlemen had been imprisoned in the Tower for safe-keeping. (2) The most suspect group of all were the miners, a great throng of notoriously riotous men. When the Wesleys came into the county and addressed themselves directly to these men, they found themselves

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*The vast bulk of the surviving evidence on the riots is contained in the writings of the Wesleys, to some extent therefore, the importance of instigation by identifiable opponents is probably exaggerated.

being represented by the clergy and gentry as agents of the Pretender.

These rumours multiplied quickly, and confident assertions of the Wesleys' treason were being made. Thus at Morvah in 1744, John Wesley found that many of the society were uneasy because of the confident assertions of some fishermen that they had seen Wesley a week or two back with the Pretender in France. (3) He also found the rumour current that on his last visit he had actually brought the Pretender with him, under the name of John Downes, which individual was in fact one of his assistants. (4) Near Helston in 1745, he was told:

> "All the gentlemen of these parts say that you have been a long time in France and Spain, and are now sent hither by the Pretender; and that these societies are to join him." (5)

Charles Wesley found himself similarly suspect:

> "The rebels of Helston threatened hard. All manner of evil they say of us. Papists we are, that is certain; and are for bringing in the Pretender. Nay the vulgar are persuaded I have brought him with me, and James Waller is the man." (6)

The Wesleys clearly did not just imagine such stories were current about them, for a certain Mr. Baron wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, being absolutely convinced of the truth of the assertions:

> "But learning that these Itinerant Seducers after distracting ye Heads and Hearts of the Ignorant County people were taking lists of their names and distributing Tickets amongst them with the Motto, 'As Moses lifted the Serpent in the Wilderness So must the Son of Man be lifted up. (A Motto very artfully adapted to leave room for an Evasion, But can never in my opinion be understood w—th any Degree of Propriety in Ye Sacred Book whence borrowed) And being credibly informed that Ye People so enlisted gave out that their names were to be shown to ye King of France, And that they should soon have the Liberty of Choosing what Estates they pleased, my Suspition (sic) became at length Confirmed And I can now look on these men in no other light than Emissaries of ye Pretender the King of France employed to prepare the People to join the threatened invasion if made in that Part of the Kingdom, or also to begin a new Insurrection whenever any favourable opportunity may offer." (7)

The clergy were the earliest opponents, using the pulpit as a medium to reach the people. Charles Wesley on his first visit in 1743, reported:

> "The Priests stir up the people, and make their minds evil affected towards the brethren." (8)

Since the Wesleys usually attended the church service in a village should they be there on a Sunday, they frequently heard such sermons for themselves. At St. Ives in 1743 Charles Wesley heard the Rector give a sermon which he describes as "Downright railing at the new sect, as he calls us, those enemies to the Church, seducers, troublers, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites etc." (9) At Towednack the Curate chose as his text 'Beware of false Prophets'. It may have been after this service that Charles Wesley was prevented from taking Communion:

> "When Mr. C. Wesley approached the Table, the parson retreated, and the clerk came forward, and holding out the large Prayer-book, cried out, 'Avaunt, Satan, Avaunt.'" (10)

We might remind ourselves that it was in this area where the livings of Towednack, Zennor and Uny-Lelant were held by the same man, Symonds, who had a particularly unsavourary reputation, and his curate was equally unsatisfactory. Charles Wesley was not alone in seeing them as mainly responsible for the hostility in this area:

> "The Mayor told us, that the Ministers were the principal authors of all this evil, by continually representing us in their sermons as Popish emissaries and urging the enraged multitude to take all manner of ways to stop us." (11)

When John Wesley made his first visit a few months later, he found the people singing a locally composed ditty:

> "Charles Wesley is come to town
> To try if he can pull the churches down." (12)

At Breage he found the minister had told the miners from the pulpit that he had been expelled from Oxford for fathering a bastard and had been quite 'mazed' ever since. (13)

John Nelson, who accompanied John Wesley in 1743, attended service at Zennor Church and heard the minister say in the sermon:

> "Here is a people who hold that damnable Popish doctrine of justification by faith, I beg you not to hear them." (14)

To the gentlemen and clergy there was a decided lack of propriety not only in working men preaching the Gospel, but even in their professing to having reached a higher state in God's eyes than many of their social superiors. John Wesley asked in 1745, why a certain Methodist had been apprehended by the justices at St. Just. The man in question was a tinner by the name of Edward Greenfield:

> "I asked a little gentleman at St. Just, what objection there was to Edward Greenfield. He said, 'Why the man is well enough in other things; but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven!'" (15)

Charles Wesley noted in the same year that in the Penzance area, the minister was the greatest persecutor:

> "He and the clergy of these parts are much enraged at our people's being so ready in the Scriptures. One fairly told Jonathon Reeves, he wished the Bible were in Latin only, that none of the vulgar might be able to read it. Yet these are the men that rail at us as Papists!" (16)

The opportunities which the gentlemen had as justices of the peace to make their antipathy to the Methodists effective, were used with a disregard for justice which makes the justices of Fielding's novels seem in no way unfair portrayals. When, as in the case of Walter Borlase, the clergyman was himself a justice then these powers were used with a particularly heavy hand. It was Borlase who had had Greenfield apprehended in the case mentioned above. When a member of the society went to Borlase to lay a complaint against rioters who had broken open his house and stolen his goods this Magistrate responded by declaring, 'Thou conceited fellow, art thou too turned religious? They may burn thy house if they will: thou shalt have no justice'. (17)

The same Magistrate had a Methodist preacher, Thomas Maxfield, taken up to be pressed into the army. Borlase had issued a warrant for the apprehension

of all ablebodied men who had no lawful calling or sufficient maintenance to be brought before him to be examined whether they were proper persons to serve his Majesty in the land service. The names of seven or eight persons were specified. All were Methodists, and all were known to have proper callings. But it was the itinerant preacher Maxfield whom Borlase especially wished to secure, but seems not to have been aware of his name, for at the bottom of the list was added: 'A person, his name unknown, who disturbs the peace of the parish'. Maxfield was clearly this man for as Wesley pointed out:

> "The good men easily understood this could be none but the Methodist preacher; for who disturbs the peace of the parish, like one who tells all drunkards, whoremongers and common swearers, 'You are in the highroad to Hell?'" (18)

This threat of impressment into the armed forces was a favourite weapon of the justices. The early itinerant Thomas Olivers was so threatened when in Cornwall in 1755. (19) It was a more extreme measure than the simple committal on a vagrancy charge, by means of which Borlase tried to rid the neighbourhood of the itinerant Thomas Westrell in 1744. (20) John Wesley himself when preaching at Gwennap in 1745, was seized by a gentleman, who cried, 'Seize him, seize him! I say seize the preacher for His Majesty's service'. (21) Several attempts were made to serve warrants on the Wesleys themselves, but not surprisingly the magistrates were never to be found when it came to the issue of pressing charges. This was an effective way of breaking up a meeting, but few magistrates would risk pressing charges against the Wesleys themselves. Persecuting the humble society members was another matter.

The gentry employed other tactics. At Morvah the constable read the Riot Act to get the meeting dispersed in an hour (22) Sir Francis Vyvyan tried using the carrot instead of the stick, he declared in the face of the whole congregation as they were leaving church, "If any man of this parish dares to hear these fellows, he shall not come to my Christmas Feast!"

Wesley reported a much diminished congregation as a result of this threat. (23) It did neither the poor nor Sir Francis much good however, for he died in November.

The other method open to the gentry was the instigation of mob action against the preachers. The mob was virtually given carte blanche to pull down preaching houses and beat society members. The most serious mob violence of the early years came at St. Ives. Although one of the mobs here was said by John Wesley to have been headed by a tinner, (24) the bulk of the crowds were composed of free-lance seamen fitting out in the port. Charles Wesley described the St. Ives mob as "the Minister's mob". (25) The most dangerous crowd which John Wesley faced was at Falmouth, another seaport town. (26)

Tinners formed the bulk of the mob which John Wesley termed the 'Lions of Breage', but here the mob was stirred up by slanderous accusations by the minister. (27) The mob of tinners who scared off Wesley's hearers at Gwennap were said to have been "made drunk on purpose". (28)

The most serious tinners' riots were faced not by the Wesleys, but by their itinerant assistants, Millard and Westrell in 1744. A mob burst in on a meeting at Crowan, and roughly handled the members, but missed the preacher. They declared they would catch up with him at Camborne, and when Westrell went there he was taken up by the mob and taken before a magistrate who committed him on a vagrancy charge. (29)

On another occasion when Westrell had been preaching at Gwennap, a mob rushed into the house, he fled but was overtaken and dragged back. He was rescued by a mine captain and some other Methodists, who used the captain's authority to frighten off the tinners. When the mob gained in strength, Westrell was again forced to flee, and hid in a cornfield, whilst the mob, unable to find him, vented its spleen by pulling the preaching house to pieces. (30) A few days later, his colleague Henry Millard was preaching at Stithians, when he was warned that a mob from Gwennap was out hunting for him.

Forewarned, Millard fled. The mob was said to consist of between three and four hundred men. Undoubtedly many of them were tinners, for Gwennap was almost solely a mining parish, but significantly it was also described as containing horsemen, who were clearly not tinners, nor other members of the labouring poor. Further the mob declared that it was under orders from the gentlemen, to pull down any house that the preacher was in. (31)

By 1747 the serious rioting was at an end. Jacobite accusations were no longer relevant. John Wesley wrote from St. Ives in July of that year, describing a very changed situation:

> "A great door and effectual is opened now, almost in every corner of this country. Here is such a change within these two years as has hardly been seen in any other part of England. Wherever we went, we used to carry our lives in our hands; and now there is not a dog to wag his tongue. Several Ministers are clearly convinced of the truth; few are bitter; most seem to stand neuter. Some of the Gentlemen (so called) are almost the only opposers now; drinking, revelling, cursing, swearing Gentlemen, who neither will enter into the kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer any others, if they can prevent it." (32)

The numbers of the rioters had always been small when set against the size of the congregations which the Wesleys assembled, and the decline of mob activity was an indication of its futility, when the bulk of the populace were either supporters of the Wesleyans, or were no longer prepared to accept them as enemies of the church and state. The minister at Camborne, once a staunch opponent of the Methodists, had given up, saying, "One may as well blow against the wind." (33)

Even at the peak of the violence there were indications that the rioters represented a minority cause. When Charles Wesley preached in the heart of the tinners at Pool in 1743, on his first visit, an interrupter was quickly dealt with by the tinners, and only Wesley's intercession prevented him from being severely beaten. (34) It was clearly the weight of Methodist numbers which the mob who held Thomas Maxfield prisoner at Crowan feared when they hastily moved him further away, on hearing that a body of Methodists five

hundred strong was coming to rescue him by force. (35) At Redruth in 1743, Charles Wesley was reporting that the town was so completely won over that if any one spoke against the Methodists, the tinners declared that he ought to be stoned. (36) A party of St. Just men who pursued a preacher to St. Ives, were so dreadfully mauled by the women of that town that they could hardly crawl home. (37)

The active opposition to the Methodists had largely ceased by 1747. There were further riots and persecutions when the Methodists first came to villages in the non-mining parts of Cornwall, but initial hostility in new places is not surprising. One incident is worthy of notice however, because it offers a parallel to the anti-Jacobite hostility of the early years in west Cornwall. This took place at Liskeard in the 1790's, and the disaffection to whom the Methodists were at this time linked was Jacobinism:

> "A huge mob attacked the window immediately below the pulpit of the humbly thatched meeting house, in Castle Street ... vociferating, 'Burn Trudgeon (the Preacher) and Tom Paine'." (38)

Although there were attempts, notably by Richard Polwhele, to accuse the Methodists of Cornwall of Jacobin sympathies, they were not very seriously regarded. Little Methodist sympathy for Tom Paine could be expected, for he was after all the author of the Age of Reason as well as of the Rights of Man.

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(34) Charles Wesley Journal 19. 7.1743 Pearce p. 32
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The Appeal of Methodism to the Labouring Miners

Explanations of the rise of Methodism in west Cornwall traditionally begin by emphasising the failure of the Anglican clergy to fulfil their parochial role. The established Church it is argued, not only failed to evangelise the labouring classes, but was even in need of evangelising itself, freely indulging in habits which it should have been condemning as vices in the poor. Such a picture is of course an exaggeration, but it remains true that many of the Anglican clergy were failing to act as examples of righteous living to their parishioners.*

There were two extreme poles each of which was costly to the clergy in losing them the allegience of the poor. At the bottom of the scale was the rusticated curacy, to whose frequent inefficiency and incapability the poorly kept parish registers are a surviving testimony. At the top of the scale were the higher clergy - the wealthy vicars with their plural livings. These men did not suffer from a low level education and intellectual ability, but from the reverse. Literary men and scholars many of them may have been, but they had few points of contact with the labouring poor. By family connexions and by social inclination they were moving into the circles of the gentry. Plurality was seen by William Borlase, Vicar of Ludgvan, as essential to the social status of the clergy:

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*C.f. John Wesley's comment on the Vicar of Lelant and his curate at St. Ives:

> "I wish to God, all the clergy throughout the land were 'zealous for inward, solid virtue'. But I dare not say one in ten of those I have known are so in any degree. The two Clergymen of this place (St. Ives), on a late public occasion, were led home at one or two in the morning in such a condition as I care not to describe."
> (Letters (ed. C.J. Telford 1931) vol. ii p. 97)

Wesley's opinion of the Vicar of Lelant was shared by the Wesley's greatest Anglican enemy in the county, the Rev. Walter Borlase, who records that when this clergyman was given a set of books as a charitable donation, he sold them to buy tobacco and beer. (J. Pearce, The Wesleys in Cornwall (Truro 1964) footnote to p. 30).

> "Greater strictness in conferring pluralities may possibly be wanting, but abolishing pluralities will be dangerous amputation and such as the wound does by no means require; all degrees of clergy must suffer, but the parochial most of all, as being deprived of the only method of advancing themselves into leisure and a capacity of studying without falling into any inferior occupation to maintain themselves and educate their families." (1)

Plurality with its concomitant of non-residence was the clerical abuse most characteristic of the time and productive of much weakness. The economic poverty of many livings made joinings necessary to make a competence for the clergy, both in work and income. But, as Dr. Miles Brown has pointed out, the ruling factor in the eighteenth century was the exploitation of patronage. For example, Walter Harte was Vicar of St. Austell and of St. Blasey (1758-74), John Trist held St. Stephens by Saltash 1753-73, with Altarmun 1757-76, and Veryan 1773-81 with the mining parish of Kenwyn and Kea 1776-81. John Pennick, Chancellor of Exeter Cathedral, (1706-24) held two Cornish livings: he was Vicar of St. Hilary, and Rector of St. Ewe. (2)

From John Wesley's letters we learn that the Rector of Lelant in 1747, a mining parish, also held the livings of two other parishes in the mining district: Zennor and Towednack, keeping an inefficient curate at Zennor. (3) William Borlase who held the living of Ludgvan for fifty years from 1722, added the large mining parish of St. Just in 1752. (4) His brother, Walter, held Madron and Kenwyn, and his son became Vicar of Zennor in 1768, and on his father's death added Madron to it. (5)

The replies to the Bishop of Exeter's Visitation Queries 1744-6, reveal that 110 clergy resided on their cure, whilst 36 did not, of these 36 only nine lived near enough to serve their people from their domiciles. Of the remaining 27 parishes only eight were provided with permanent curates. The next series of replies, those of 1779, reveal a deteriorating situation. 89 of the clergy were resident, and 57 non-resident. (6)

By the time of the visitation of 1821, 82 were resident and 63 non-

resident. From these replies of 1821, we can obtain a closer view of how the mining parishes were affected. (7)

Breage was a populous mining parish, with a daughter church at Germoe, here the living was held by a clergyman resident at Luxulyan, quite distant. The Vicar of Crowan was non-resident, and the living of Gwennap in the hands of a man who also held the living of a second large mining parish, Illogan. Gwinear was held by a clergyman who was resident master at a Grammar school in Kent. The Vicar of Kenwyn and Kea lived in London, but this living was well served since Richard Polwhele held the curacy, and preferred living there to on his own living at Manaccan. The Vicar of the mining district of Perranzabuloe lived in London, as did the Vicars of Sancreed and Sithney. Devonshire clergymen held the livings of both Unylelant and Zennor.

It is clear that the serious abuse of non-residence, far from improving in the face of Wesleyan competition, actually worsened through the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, reaching its nadir in the eighteen-twenties, before being belatedly improved in 1831. (8)

The practice of employing a curate in non-resident livings was not universal. Where distance made it possible, there was a tendency for a Vicar to officiate in both of his livings. Where a curate was employed, the lowness of the salary must have affected the quality of the men available to fill the places. Two letters from William Borlase to his curate at St. Just illustrate the laxity which could prevail in a large mining parish if left in the hands of an underpaid curate:

> "I had such a poor account of my parishioners, as that they are very much given to drinking, especially on the Sabbath day of which they spend a great part in the ale tippling houses in the Church Town, and begin to absent themselves from their Church on holy days, with some other irregularities too many here to be mentioned; so that you will doubtless think it (word illegible)***** that I must desire you to preach to them on the observation of the Sabbath and that you would speak to the church wardens and constables that they punish the first persons they take in any ale-houses during divine service as the law directs, and I will

> appear with them on all such occasions; and I desire the most public notice may be given to all the parishioners that they shall be prosecuted with the utmost severity for all breaches of the Sabbath day, and since they are so easily seduced from their duty into intemperance and profaning the Sabbath, which (you know) are the two great inletts (sic) of all vice, I must desire you on no account whatsoever whilst your health permits to be absent in the forenoon of a Sunday and as seldom as possibly may be in the afternoon, knowing that we must give an account of both forenoon and afternoon to the Diocesan that has appointed us to the cure of these souls, and that the several tenements of the parish be called upon in the order as you think fitting to send their children to be catechised every Sunday afternoon, and that you will give notice that prayers will begin on all holy daies (sic) at the usual hour at eleven o'clock at the farthest and at half after ten on Sundays. These methods (which I follow thank God with some success at Ludgvan) may contribute in some measure to prevent that depravity of manners to which my parishioners of St. Just are too subject ..." (9)

This letter was written in 1734, to a man who was to prove an unsatisfactory curate, for Borlase was forced to write to him again in 1738. This time the criticism was more open than implied:

> "Ever since I was Vicar of St. Just I have taken every opportunity of talking to you of the largeness of the congregation which you are (by my means) licensed to serve, how necessary it was for you to be generally in the way where private baptisms must of necessity be so frequent, the sick many, and notices to bury the dead must every now and then call upon you ... You have for the last five years left this congregation without divine service one part of the Sabbath in serving for other clergymen much oftener than it was your turn ... Many populous villages of this parish lye at a distance from the church, for which reason I have often told you how expedient it is for you to begin prayers at an early hour ... but you have not begun at proper hours notwithstanding my frequent notices and intreaties, so that people who live at a distance from the church cannot conveniently attend divine service and do complain against you as the occasion of it. You are so often out of the parish and at such a distance generally that people cannot conveniently come to you to give notice for burying the dead, and when they have found you, and you have appointed the hour, you are not punctual of which people may justly complain, nay sometimes you have not come at all for the whole day, but the people

> have been forced at last to leave the corpse in the church all night. *I find many of the congregation tardy in receiving the sacrament; I have* told you of it, and what *methods you have taken to* bring them out of *such a state I do not find, but* I advised *you to lay them under a prohibition which* you might justly do, and which probably might bring them to some thoughts of receiving, and this was never to admit any non-communicants to be gossips (god-parents) notwithstanding this and 'tis expressly contrary to the 29th canon you admitt (sic) all without distinction. You were advised to call out the children to catechism separately by their tenements but you do it not. You undertake to read prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, but you are wanting often without giving any notice, and when you come, you come at unseasonable hours. You keep a list of the persons buried married and christened not in the Register, but in a loose scrip of paper ... You have added to all this what is worse than all, which is your engaging yourselfe (sic) to supply another church every second Sunday, whereby the church of St. Just is destitute of evening service one Sunday in two ... You have entered into this engagement five months since without once consulting me, nay you have shewn still a greater contempt of me for you have continued to serve this other church to the neglect of your own without mentioning it to me even after you were informed how uneasy I was at your acting in this extraordinary manner. This you have done though there are six clergymen nearer to Paul than yourselfe and five of these have much less congregations ..." (10)

Borlase ended the letter by offering another chance but warning, "If I proceed to extremities 'tis your own fault."

The man was a particularly unsatisfactory curate, and Borlase was given less trouble by his successors. It was difficult to find a good curate for an isolated parish in west Cornwall, as Borlase complained in 1762:

> "It is a great pity that some discouragement cannot be laid in the way of curates shifting themselves from one church to another upon the most frivolous pretences, so that instead of applying contentedly to their charge they have undertaken, they are immediately considering where they may translate themselves more into the ways of gaiety and imaginary pleasure." (11)

Good curates were likely to be transient. The sort of curate likely to be content with such an isolated parish as St. Just, was unlikely to be of the most efficient kind. Even after the death of the curate to whom the above letters were addressed, Borlase still had to pay close attention to the

running of St. Just. In 1768 he was writing to his new curate:

> "I have had a bad account of the Sexton of St. Just; pray be so kind as to tell him from me that if he does not mend his manners, keep himself sober, and attend the duties of his office with proper respect, on the next complaint I shall certainly displace him, without further notice." (12)

The letters which have been quoted, it might be argued, show a clergyman suitably concerned for the parishioners under his care, but the point is, that Borlase was dealing with parochial problems at second hand. Had there been a resident Vicar at St. Just, then such periodic purges by post would not have been necessary.

Whatever the failings of the Cornish clergy, the rise of Methodism was as much facilitated by changes in the size and distribution of the population as by the failings and inefficiencies of the clergy. The growth of the mining industry occasioned the rise of new settlements within the parishes, remote from the church town. The parish as a unit bore little relationship to the facts of population distribution. Borlase was well aware of the opportunities which such a situation presented to the Wesleyans:

> "The person who comes to it (St. Just) should have a due sense of the irregularity and ill tendency of Mr. Wesley's principles and practice, because this parish being populous and few people of figure or knowledge, is one of this quack's constant stages." (13)

Even where the miners were not removed from the church town, the physical limitations of the church could still be exposed, as at Borlase's resident parish of Ludgvan:

> "Everyone now confesses that our church is much too small for the present inhabitants, above fifty persons last Sunday having been forced to stand or sit in the alleyes (sic). In our little gallery the men are so crowded on one the other's backs ..." (14)

This was written in 1739, and by the turn of the century, the likely results of the situation had been clearly demonstrated to the Cornish clergy. Redruth was described in 1800 as follows:

> "The Methodists have Redruth to themselves; theirs may be called the established religion;

> for the church is a considerable way out of the town; and there are no Dissenters, except a very few quakers." (15)

Polwhele described a similar situation in his parish of Kenwyn and Kea in 1833:

> "The population of Kenwyn and Kea, amounts to more than 7,000, for the most part miners and their families. The villagers of Chacewater are thrown to the distance of more than five miles from their parish church; and surely it would be unreasonable to expect their regular attendance at their parish church during the winter season. Into what hands they have fallen, it would be superfluous to say."* (16)

Parochial organisation was very inelastic, and likely to remain so as long as plurality remained the basis of the clergy's economic substance. Methodist organisation, with its class meetings and its facility of circuit sub-division when numbers merited it, was able to keep much more in step with population changes.

The inadequacies of the Anglican church, and the suitability of the settlement pattern, while going a long way towards explaining the facility of Methodist growth in west Cornwall, do not fully explain the appeal of Wesleyan preaching to the labouring miners.** There is a traditional

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*Polwhele also remarks:

> "From the extent and populousness ... of some of the mining parishes, it is impossible that our pastoral care can embrace all the flock as we could wish."

(Rev. R. Polwhele, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Considered by Bishop Lavington (1833) Introduction p. cxix)

**In a recent article Dr. Currie says of theories of Methodist growth which emphasise "certain postulated mental states of the population where Methodism grew most", that they may be unnecessary. He suggests that perhaps Methodism grows, "where Anglicanism is weak not because of the mental characteristics of the population of such areas but because in those areas communities can be gathered and chapels built without persecution or disruption by squire or parson." This would seem however, merely to establish a certain objective situation which might have been almost a prerequisite for the successful growth of Methodism. It does not explain why it was Methodism which was able to take advantage of this situation. Accepting that favourable conditions for the growth of a religious movement existed in certain areas, we still need to explain why it was Methodism which appealed so strongly to the labouring poor. (R. Currie, "A Micro-Theory of Methodist Growth", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society xxxii (Oct 1961) p 64)

Methodist historiography which offers what might be termed a 'universal panacea' theory of Methodist success. The depravity of the tinners is emphasised. They, it appears, lived without fear of God, and without the benefit of 'experimental religion'; swearing, fornicating, drinking, fighting, wrecking, smuggling, profaning the Sabbath with an unconcerned regularity, and in general living a life of unmitigated sin. Then came Wesley, and his teaching filled every moral, spiritual and social need of the hitherto deprived Cornish.* The emphasis on the failings and inadequacies of the established church is a necessary corollary of such a view.

Such an explanation is, to say the least, partial. Even had the Anglican church been corrupt and inadequate since the Reformation, it is difficult to believe that the tinners and fishermen of the Cornish villages, had been, until the coming of Wesley, living for two hundred years in a moral, spiritual, and cultural vacuum. Either facing the changes of fortune and the harsh demands of the world, with a self-reliance and intellectual certainty quite out of keeping with their level of sophistication and the narrowness of their intellectual horizons; or else living in unsupported misery, reeling before a fate which they could not begin to understand, and finding oblivion for their sorrows in alcohol or suicide.

The ale-house was certainly a sanctuary for many. The historian Tonkin noted in the 1730's the large number of such establishments in the mining parishes:

> "If there be but three houses together, two of them shall be ale-houses." (17)

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*C.f. the view of one of the movement's best known historians:

> "There is no more splendid page in the Methodist annals than the transformation of Cornwall. Quite apart from the viciousness and lawlessness which prevailed; there was almost a total ignorance of religion. Churches were unattended, and the very phraseology of religion had become obsolete."
> (M. Edwards John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century (1933) p. 160)

William Beckford, who visited Gwennap in 1787, observed:

> "Several woeful figures in tattered garments, with pickaxes on their shoulders crawled out of a dark fissure and repaired to a hovel which I learnt was a gin shop. There they pass the few hours allotted them above ground, and drink it is to be hoped, an oblivion of their subterranean existence." (18)

The ale-houses were certainly sanctuaries against which Methodism especially fought, but it could hardly be the case, that until Wesley's arrival, an uneducated Cornish peasantry faced the harsh realities of life, and the seemingly inexplicable reversals of fate, with an assurance and an acceptance which needed no prop other than the ale-house and the fatalism of habit.

They were not, of course, entirely without the opium of religion, and if it was a religion which was less demanding than Wesleyanism, then its consolation value to the casual adherent may have been greater.

An isolated, village people whose lives were to such an extent lived outside of the culture of literacy, comes to possess a background of beliefs; partly religious, although not necessarily Christian in derivation, and partly magical, against which it seeks to understand the realities of existence; especially those calamities like floods, fires, or storms which press so heavily on a people who live close to the margin of subsistence. The miners and fishermen of west Cornwall both pursued occupations in which the role of chance was considerable. The fisherman was not only dependent on wind and tide, but in some seasons the shoals of pilchards on which his living depended, failed to visit Cornwall in their usual large numbers. In other years they came late, when considerable hardship had already been endured.

The miners were paid under the tribute and tutwork systems, in which, as we have seen above, the role of fortune was considerable. Both tinners and fishermen were faced with great dangers of life and limb in their daily

labour.* When this factor is taken into account and it is realised that both their lives and livelihoods were insecure, it is small wonder, that superstitions attributed powers over the mines and seas, to agencies other than those who ruled on the dry land and on the surface. Fishermen would not put to sea if a minister were seen near their boats before they set sail. No more would miners permit the sign of the cross to be made underground.**

The underground spirits of the mine were known as 'Knackers'. Related to the piskey, they were believed to be the spirits of Jews, who had supposedly worked the mines in Roman times. Like similar spirits, they were morally neutral, whether they brought good or bad fortune depended upon the treatment which they received, or the degree of scepticism with which their existence was accepted. If left a share of good ore, or offered a crust from the miner's lunch, they brought good fortune, indicating with the tapping of their hammers and picks the location of good lodes, or warning of sudden cave-ins or unguarded shafts. If ignored or treated with sceptical hostility, then they could bring bad fortune to a miner. At best he found no more good ore while he continued to work in that mine; at worse he fell a victim to one of the many underground dangers. The classic collections of Cornish folklore, the works of Hunt and Botrell, are full of accounts of encounters with the Knackers.

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*A Wesleyan minister who was in Cornwall in the 1840's, had this to say of the miners and Methodism in the eighteenth century:

> "The underground miners were a short-lived race. A man was old at forty, and fifty years meant old age. Hence in the ancient days when the Wesleys first came into the county the miners as a class lived a very fast life indeed - a life of animal recklessness. All the more was this the case because of the uncertainty of their life because of the dangers ... which attended the working of the mines ... Life was so uncertain, and at any rate so short, that the converted miners felt continually the world to come to be very near."
> (J.H. Rigg Wesleyan Methodist Reminiscences Sixty Years Ago (1904) p. 67)

**The folklorist Hunt records that when a friend of his going through some levels, made a cross by the side of one to know his way back, as he had to return on his own, he was compelled to alter it into another form. (R. Hunt 'Popular Romances of the West of England' (1881 ed.) p. 349)

Above ground in the everyday life of the mining villages, good and bad fortune could be explained by the struggles of good and evil spirits. Sometimes a human agency, the witch, was added. Witchcraft to the extent which it depends upon an identifiable personal relationship between two persons; the bewitcher and the bewitched, is a theory of causation which survives best within small communities where such relationships are easily identifiable. At work, the miner was already involved with unrelated persons in specialised relationships within a large scale impersonal set of institutions, and so here explanation did not so often seek a human agency. Above ground, it was a different matter. In 1826 the Rev. Richard Polwhele wrote:

> "Within my remembrance, there were conjuring parsons and cunning clerks; every blacksmith was a doctor, every old woman was a witch. In short all nature seemed to be united - its wells, its plants, its birds, its beasts, its reptiles, and even inanimate things in sympathising with human credulity; in predicting or in averting, in relieving or in aggravating misfortune."

Polwhele adds:

> "In the last age some of the rusticated clergy used to favour the popular superstition, by pretending to the power of laying ghosts etc. etc. I could mention the names of several persons whose influence over their flocks was solely attributable to this circumstance." (19)

Indeed it was well into the nineteenth century, that Curate Richards of Camborne was reputedly seen by miners attempting to lay the ghost of Lord de Dunstanville with a whip. (20)

There were some who saw the utility of superstition. C.S. Gilbert in 1817, although not wishing to advocate its cause, was persuaded that:

> "When in vulgar minds it is entirely done away, religion will languish if not expire."* (21)

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*In the disturbed year of 1795, the Helston lawyer, Christopher Wallis noted in his journal:

> "The lower classes of people, are become very riotous over the kingdom, and a spirit of discontent and wantonness prevails amongst them. Superstition is gone, and refinements there on have made the people very irreligious."
> (Mss. Journal of Christopher Wallis 7th Nov. 1795)

Clergymen of sophistication like William Borlase were likely to have little sympathy with such beliefs. In 1728 he had occasion to write to a certain Mr. Bettesworth:

> "I hope the rumours of your pretending to conjuration are not true, and I have so much charity as to believe that you have not been meddling in the dangerous mysteries of a lower world, but rather, like a good christian defy and refuse all intercourse with the devil. Yet since there are such rumours, and you are said to take upon you to discover lost and stolen goods. I hope you will think that to retrieve and vindicate your character it will be necessary for you to use abundant caution that you give no encouragement to silly women to come to you on such wicked and foolish errands; and particularly I am obliged to desire that no such encouragements may be given to those persons who are the flock and must be the care of your most humble servant." (22)

The Methodists could make no compromise with folk-beliefs if they were attributing powers to any agencies which were not God or Satan, or a medium through which either worked. It was reported in 1817:

> "Under the soul subduing power of the Methodists. ... The miners of Cornwall are emancipating themselves from the terrors of imagination." (23)

Such emancipation, if emancipation it was, could not have been accomplished without a considerable lapse of time. As late as 1869, the Rev. C.G. Honor was forced to admit that until a recent period:

> "wonderful stories were still told amongst the miners and fishermen of the doings of giants, fairies, piskies, mermaids and demons."

but added confidently:

> "under the elevating influence of sobriety and true religion, the Cornish are rapidly rising above their former degrading credulousness." (24)

Methodism did not so much displace the folk beliefs as translate them into a religious idiom. Here it should be emphasised that neither witchcraft nor spirit agency as a theory of causation, precludes the common sense of empirical observation. Max Gluckman has developed this point in his study, The Logic of Witchcraft:

> "every misfortune, like every piece of good fortune involves two questions: the first is 'how' did it occur, and the second is 'why' it occurred at all. The 'how' is answered by common sense empirical observation: the son died because he was bitten by a poisonous snake. But this does not explain why the son was bitten by that snake and at that time and place; or indeed why that man was bitten and not some other man altogether. Beliefs in witchcraft explain why particular persons at particular times and places suffer particular misfortunes - accident, disease, and so forth. Witchcraft as a theory of causation is concerned with the singularity of misfortune." (25)

To the agnostic and to the modern scientific mind no answer is necessarily sought to the 'why' question. It is chance, the intersection of two chains of events in space-time. Methodism sought the answer by involving the hand of God and that of the Devil. This is not to deny that many forms of religion do not ultimately rely on the omnipotent deity as a final explanation, but it is true that in the social history of British religious practice, Methodism was far more prone than most other churches, sects or connexions of comparable quantitive weight, to give an excessive degree of comprehensiveness and frequency to the occurrence of divine intervention.

It is possible that the notion of an omnipotent deity would have a comprehensiveness which would recommend itself to traditional societies at times of stress and change. As communities grow in size, the close community setting in which witchcraft has most relevance is broken up. As capitalism increases the scope of industrial enterprise, and removes the scene of labour from the home and workshop and the small scale mine working, then increasingly impersonal relationships grow up. When slumps and depressions, and mine accidents and closures affect hundreds instead of tens of miners, then agencies such as witches or knockers which explain singularity of misfortune become less relevant. It is a feature of an omnipotent deity theory of ultimate causation that it has a comprehensiveness which can explain the fortunes of both the individual and the community, and, indeed, of mankind in general.

It was the credulousness of the Cornish labourers which was an essential part of the ready acceptance of Methodism. The teachings of John Wesley answered the needs of the villagers, not because they demanded a new and rational world outlook, but, perhaps, because they did not. Wesleyan teaching did not ask that man understand his environment, except inasmuch as he was to realise that what seemed incomprehensible to him, was the work of a God who owed him no explanation. Not that good fortune always followed the good: the tests of faith could be pretty stiff, and the rewards which the wicked might seem to reap in this world were after all of no consequence, when set against what lay in store for them in the world to come. The hand of God was seen in everything from bee-stings to earthquakes. 'That God is himself the author and sin the moral cause of earthquakes; (whatever the natural cause may be), cannot be denied," wrote John Wesley, not denying that there is an empirical explanation for earthquakes, but emphasising the 'why' question, and seeing the hand of God as the answer. (26)

At St. Just in 1755, the power of the Lord over the small details of life was clearly indicated to him:

> "The sun (nor could we contrive it otherwise) shone full in my face when I began the hymn; but just as I ended it a cloud arose, which covered it till I had done preaching. Is anything too small for the providence of Him by whom our very hairs are numbered?" (27)

And at the other end of the scale, the notion of God intervening to punish sin in a community with a major disaster was still being clearly stated by the evangelical periodical the Cornish Banner (which although not an official connexional magazine was overwhelmingly Methodist in flavour and content) as late as 1847, when it offered the following explanation for the Wheal Rose Mine disaster:

> "Among so large a number of persons as were employed at East Wheal Rose, - 1260 - there were many of a very wicked and abandoned character; and by many persons on the spot, the visitation is looked upon in the light of a judgement. Be this as it may, the word of God certainly directs us to the

> contemplation of his hand in all such occurrences. 'Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' We trust that a salutary and lasting impression has been produced upon the minds of many persons in the neighbourhood; and certainly there is a loud appeal to the whole community, and especially to those similarly employed, 'Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!" (28)

Less spectacularly the hand of God might be seen in the varying fortunes of the tributer. When John Harris did well it was Providence which had blessed his labours. (29)

When the nineteenth century local preacher Billy Bray brought two orphans to his already impoverished cottage, he waited for the Lord to provide for their upkeep, and was not disappointed. A visitor called:

> "I thought I would give Billy something, and found I had £2 15s. 10d. in my pocket. Seeing Billy's wife in so much distress, I decided to give Billy five shillings towards their maintenance, which when Billy received, he said, 'There, Joey, the Lord has sent five shillings already, although the children have not eaten a penny loaf'; while I felt as if I had stolen the five shillings, and it was impressed upon my mind I had not given enough, and said, 'Here, Billy, give me that five shillings, and take ten shillings for the children'. Billy replied, "Praise the Lord! Joey, didn't I tell you the Lord could feed them here as well as in the union?' But I became more miserable, and felt I ought to give Billy more; and at last said, 'here, Billy, the Lord is displeased with me give me that half-sovereign back, and take a sovereign'. He began to praise the Lord, and told his wife to shout 'Hallelujah! for the Lord would provide!' I tried to read but a feeling of wretchedness came over me, and I said, 'Lord, what am I to do?' and the answer was, 'Give Billy more', and I told him I had not given him enough yet. 'Take another sovereign'. Billy again shouted, 'Glory be to God! Cheer up Joey the money is coming!' I then asked the Lord to make me happy, as I had only fifteen shillings and tenpence left, but the impression still was that I ought to give Billy more. I then gave him ten shillings, but could not rest until I had given him all I had; but he refused to take the odd tenpence, saying, 'No, brother, keep that to pay the turnpike gates when you go home'. Billy then said, 'Lets have a little prayer', and while he was praying such divine powers rested on us as

> I cannot describe, and I never expect such a blessing again this side of Heaven."* (30)

When Bray decided to build a chapel at Cross Lanes he met with opposition from other members of the society who thought it best built on another site:

> "Our preacher came to me, and told me that the members had been to him to stop me from building the chapel where I had begun. Then I told him that the Lord had put into my mind to build the chapel there ... He asked me whether I would be willing to cast lots whether the chapel should be built where I had begun it or in another place. 'Yes', I said, 'I was willing for I did not want to build the chapel there unless it was the Lord's will'. In the evening we went to meeting, and most of our little class was there, and the men who were against me. After preaching, our preacher wrote three lots — for Twelveheads, Tippet's Stamps, and for Cross Lanes, which was the place where I had begun my chapel. When they drew the lots the lot came for Cross Lanes to be the place for the chapel." (31)

Divine intervention was most clearly seen when it was intervention to save, the 'Lord's people', the Methodists from danger or persecution. John Wesley relates such an occasion in his Journal for 1755. The Helston class was meeting in a certain house, when one of the members received a premonition of danger:

> "one of them cried in an uncommon tone, 'We will not stay here, we will go to such a house, which was in quite a different part of the town.' They all rose immediately and went, though neither they nor she knew why. Presently, after they were gone, a spark fell into a barrel of gunpowder which was in the next room, and blew up the house. So did God preserve those who trusted in him, and prevent the blasphemy of the multitude." (32)

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*Bray once found himself in difficulties when building a chapel:

> "we had not timber enough by one principal; and I asked my Heavenly Father to send me some timber, or money to buy some. That morning there was a Wesleyan local preacher home praying; the Lord said to him while he was on his knees, 'Go down and give William Bray a pound note."
> (F.W. Bourne The King's Son A Memoir of Billy Bray (34th ed. 1898) p. 53)

Conversely, the hand of God could be frequently remarked in the misfortunes of opponents. The suffering and/or demise of an adversary provided a clear cut illustration of divine intervention and retribution. It is with no small satisfaction that John Wesley records the death of a Cornish clergyman who opposed the Methodists:

> "But a year or two since it was observed that he grew thoughtful and melancholy, and about nine months ago, he went into his own necessary house and hanged himself." (33)

Or again in 1757, we find him writing:

> "I rode on to Illogan, but not to the house where I used to preach; indeed, his wife promised Mr. P. before he died that she would always receive the preachers, but she soon changed her mind. God has just taken her only son, suddenly killed by a pit falling upon him, and on Tuesday last a young, strong man, riding to his burial, dropped off his horse stone dead. The concurrence of these awful providences added considerably to our congregation." (34)

Such a view of the judgement served out by an angry deity prevailed well into the nineteenth century. In 1839, William Driffield, a Primitive Methodist minister at St. Ives entered in his diary a comprehensive listing of the Lord's dealings with his opposers:

> "Looking over the way God has lead me it is mysterious. I have been here four years. My opposers have so far been put down. When I came into the circuit 264 members, now 970. Enemies put down and others that opposed suffered. Bromele ill Pensance, Coulson gone out of his mind, Elias wife ill two years, Moon ill Pensance, Mr. Blasey died suddenly, June 24th 1838, the day I should be removed he wrote against me. He was mayor of St. Ives. Strange mother died, sister died, brother in law drowned. Mary Pellard lost 6/0. Cheel married old woman, broke up association and New Connexion will not have him. John Hicks assisted and sold up Redruth 1838. Day married and left. Westward off and married. Strings party broke, he turned out of the Methodist Society. Petty made disturbances he has gone to St. Austell — look and see how he gets on. The General committee will not accept Parkinson and the Circuit cannot employ him. Will he make trouble? Lord prepare me for it." (35)

The clearest case of such an occurrence, is that of Charles Wesley and Squire Eustick of St. Just. Richard Treffry Jnr. in his Memoirs of

Mr. John Edwards Tresize published in 1837, relates a tradition of St. Just Methodism that when Charles Wesley visited the St. Just society at a time when it was meeting with especially severe persecution at the hands of Eustick, he announced from the pulpit, "The man who has troubled you this day shall trouble you no more for ever." (36) A few weeks later Eustick died insane. The impression which such a coincidence of events would make on the minds of the villagers is easy to imagine. And the significance is hardly lessened by the fact that the popular memory which Treffry records does not correspond exactly with what Wesley actually said as recorded in his journal. Here he records that he asked, "Nothing doubting, that the door might again be opened, and that he who hinders might be taken out of the way as God knew best." (37) Eustick certainly died about three months later. It is not difficult to see the transformation from Wesley's rather guarded statement, to the unequivocable statement which popular tradition attributed to him.

Methodism, since its theology was so simple, so black and white, in its presentation, found itself being inescapably linked with existing folklore. The preacher could be regarded as the interpreter of God's will, just as witches or conjurers were the mediums through which the spirit world operated. At their simplest these powers of intercession with God on man's behalf, might amount to nothing more than the recollection of an old man of a local preacher of his boyhood:

> "If we heard that Uncle Tom had prayed for fine weather on feast days, we never doubted but that we should have it." (38)

At the other extreme came such examples as we have seen of the wrath of God, severely punishing the Methodists' opposers.

In the rural districts there could occur a strange inter-mingling of folk and Methodist beliefs. This happened notably with the Bible Christians who evangelised villages in the first half of the nineteenth century which had often been hardly touched by Wesleyan Methodism. A writer in the

Western Morning News relates that in the mining village of Tywardreath, a local preacher and Sunday School teacher who was a farmer by profession, had a bullock die, and suspecting an old woman of the village of ill-wishing it, he roasted its heart, upon which the old woman woke up screaming. Both the farmer and the woman were Bible Christians. The roasting of the heart was preceded by the reading of a certain chapter from the Bible. The same writer recalls that a miner of the same sect was thought to have supernatural powers of conjuration. When he failed to find a pig lost by a fellow miner, the latter's rejoinder was:

> "Ah William, you are not so pious as you used to be, or you could have instantly told me where to find my pig." (39)

William Bottrell gives an interesting account of an ill-wishing in west Cornwall in 1870. The lateness of the incident is not its most remarkable feature. Significantly the woman who was regarded as responsible for laying the curse was a backslider, a former society member who since marriage had ceased to attend the chapel. In a village where the Methodists were the dominant cultural group, it is interesting but hardly surprising to find that a woman who actively resisted their influence, (and she is reported to have described them as being no better, "than a set of duffans, and back-biting and undermining hypocrites.") would be regarded as possessing at least some link with the forces of evil.* (40)

The Devil was the other side of the Methodist coin. Since he was believed in, then bad fortune could be seen either as the negative hand of God testing, or the positive hand of Satan tempting. God's hand was the

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*Methodism could give a new relevance and reinforcement to an existing superstition. The circles of stones which can be found on several of the Cornish moors, were said to the petrification of young men or women who danced or sported on the Sabbath. That Robert Hunt should find this superstition among the common people still going strong is not surprising, when one considers the added relevance which Methodism's rigid sabbatarianism and abhorence of dancing and sports must have given it. (R. Hunt, Popular Romances of the West of England (1881 ed.) p. 177)

stronger for Satan was powerless against pure faith, but an unsophisticated mind accustomed to see life's vicissitudes as being determined by the struggles of the opposing forces of good and evil, was not too much stretched to accept a theology which substituted God and Satan.

The Rev. W. Haslam, who held a Cornish living in the eighteen-fifties, recalls:

> "I noticed that in dreams and visions in Cornwall the Lord Jesus very often appears, and the devil also; these are real persons to the Cornish mind, and their power is respectively acknowledged." (41)

Recorded physical manifestations of God, Father or Son, are rare, although a man at the Bodmin revival of 1835, claimed to have seen Christ three times with his natural eye." (42) But a devil with a corporal existence was widely believed in. Even such sophisticated minds as Samuel Drew, the 'Cornish Metaphysician' and former mine worker, believed himself to have seen either the Devil or his messenger. (43) In form the devil, or his agent, was usually bestial, resembling a large shaggy dog, or even a bear, but always hairy and with eyes that glowed fiercely red.

When Billy Bray was passing a shaft where some miners had been killed, he became convinced that they would appear to him from the invisible world, but nothing materialised. He approached a second shaft to pass which he had

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"The Rev. Sabine Baring Gould, for many years an Anglican minister in Cornwall, and a tireless collector of folklore from that county and elsewhere, was well aware of the elements of superstition which co-mingled with the religion of the poor:

> "Even in our own country, the most low and to us inconceivable ideas relative to God may be found among the ignorant ... A middle aged man declared to the parson of his parish that he had seen and spoken with the Almighty. He was asked what he was like. He replied that he was dressed in a black swallow-tailed coat of the very best broadcloth and wore a white tie."

Baring Gould thought that anyone who had had dealings in spiritual matters with the ignorant would have been able to cap such a story. (Rev. S. Baring Gould Strange Survivals (1892) p. 143)

to cross a narrow bridge and became convinced that the 'devil himself' would meet him on that bridge. He exclaimed: "The devil! who is he? what can he do? The devil is a fallen angel! He was turned out of Heaven by God! He is held now in chains! I am Billy Bray! God is my heavenly Father! Why should I fear the devil? ... Come on, then thou devil; I fear thee not! Come on Lucifer, and all demons! Come on, old ones and young ones, black ones and blue ones, fiery and red-hot ones, come on devil and all thy ugly hosts!" Feeling himself delivered from his fears he began to sing:

> "Jesus, the name high over all,
> In hell, or earth or sky:
> Angels and men before it fall,
> And devils fear and fly." (44)

Billy got so used to the devil's vain attempts to lead him astray, that he affectionately termed him 'old smutty face'.

A woman preacher of the Bible Christians on a lonely walk to preach, was joined by some weird creature, which the darkness made it impossible to distinguish:

> "It was possibly only a dog, but it was a matter of serious debate among the simple and earnest people who composed her congregation whether this strange companion, walking mutely by her side was sent to frighten her or be her guardian. She believed it was a messenger of Satan sent to scare her from her work." (45)

If one remembers that John Wesley himself believed in ghosts and witches, and one substitutes for the pixieys and knockers a devil with a corporal existence, then it can be seen that in west Cornwall, Methodism's appeal was the more direct because it did not involve the substitution of reason for superstition.* By and large it was a successful take over for the more comprehensive and purposive God-based belief, but an intermingling of Methodist beliefs with elder folk-beliefs was a not-unexpected feature of a period of cultural transition.

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*Dr. Currie in his recent book has noted that Wesley's greatest successes were in two areas where pre-Christian religion survived at its strongest, Cornwall and the Isle of Man.
(R. Currie Methodism Divided (1968) 21-22)

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Methodism in the Nineteenth Century

The Vicar of a Cornish parish remarked in 1833:

> "In a few words we have lost the people. The religion of the mass is become Wesleyan Methodism." (1)

The growth of Methodism in the mining districts of west Cornwall had been impressive. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Methodism and Cornish mining had become so linked that it was difficult for contemporary social commentators to talk of the latter without mentioning the former. To the original appeal and impetus of the eighteenth century was added the force of example and the establishment of a tradition, drawing the miner and his family into the stream and aiding in the growing identification of Methodism and the mining community.

In 1851 the Vicar of Redruth wrote to Dr. Pusey, informing him that he had started a sisterhood for the "poor mine girls." He had only six probationary members, but claimed that this was a great deal in a parish with, "Methodism in every house", in a county, "so wholly given up to Dissent and perversity as Cornwall." (2)

In 1795 Wesleyan membership in the county totalled 4,473 of which 3,253 were in the western circuits. By 1830 the county membership was 16,691, of which 11,954 were in the western circuits. In 1851 the county Methodist membership was 38,417, and 113,510 persons (32% of the total population) attended one or other of the Methodist churches on Census

Sunday.*(3)

The peak of Methodist membership was reached in the middle years of the nineteenth century, with an overall decline setting in from 1863. (4) A decline which was as irreversible as the decline in the prosperity of the mining industry. As the number of miners in the county dwindled so did the number of Methodists. The decline of Methodism was as inseparably tied to the decline of mining as its rise had been to the rapid growth of that industry from the mid-eighteenth century.

Regionally, and in terms of occupational groupings, the influence of the movement was even stronger than overall county figures would suggest. Of the western towns of Camborne and Hayle it was said in 1827 that they contained no household without a Methodist,** and in 1838, that in some of the western villages nine tenths of the grown population attended Methodist services. (5) Charles Barham after describing the characteristics of the

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*This suggests that attenders at Methodist services numbered about three times the society membership. The attendance figure is based upon the Mann formula of aggregating the best attended service to half the second best attended and a quarter of the third. The method probably exaggerates attendances at non-conformist chapels, but there would need to be a very large degree of exaggeration indeed to counteract the impression of a very strong Methodist influence in Cornwall. (The Rev. Thomas Shaw in his History of Cornish Methodism (Truro 1967 p. 96) presents the 1851 Census figures for Cornwall in a convenient tabular form).

If the multiplier of 3 for converting membership figures into chapel attendance figures is regarded as applicable to pre-census years, then Chapel attenders in 1830 must have numbered approximately 50,000. The county population in 1831 was 301,306, so that about 1 in 6 of the county population were attenders at Wesleyan services. By 1830 the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians also had significant numbers of attenders. The Bible Christians had 2,605 members in 1826. (T. Shaw, The Bible Christians (1965) p. 40). The Primitive Methodists had only arrived in the county in 1825, and were still in a missionary stage in many parts of the county. It is unlikely that their membership exceeded a thousand by 1830. (This is the impression obtained by aggregating individual society membership figures given by J.C.C. Probert (Primitive Methodism in Cornwall (Privately published Redruth 1966)) where such figures are available for 1830). The ratio of attenders to the total population in respect of all branches of the Methodist Church taken together must in 1830 have been in the region of 1:5. This suggests that the influence of Methodism, measured in terms of attendance ratio to total population was still increasing after 1830.

**C.f. the comment of the Vicar of Redruth in 1851 (above p. 262).

Methodist miners in 1842, agreed that his was a description which applied to one class only of the miners, but maintained that it was a class, "so numerous, that its qualities become prominent features of the whole body, when it is compared with other communities." (6)

The Divisions of Cornish Methodism

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Methodist unity was shattered by a number of divisions and offshoots. New groups of a revivalistic or democratic character splintered from the parent body and established themselves as independent connexions.

Such secessions often represented attempts to return to what was thought to be a more pure form of Methodism, in protest against a parent body which was becoming increasingly respectable, and conservative in its presentation of religion. Much of the unrestrained revivalism and enthusiasm of early Methodism had become an embarrassment to Conference leaders as their movement moved surely from sect into church.

Conference domination had long been resented at local level. Class members were not always eager to accept the authority of the itinerant preachers, and became even more suspicious of central power when these men were elevated to the rank of ministers. The roots of such oppositional sentiments go back a long way. In 1788 John Wesley wrote to the Superintendant Minister at Redruth complaining:

> "It has been observed for many years that some at Redruth were apt to despise and very willing to govern the preachers." (7)

While Wesley lived the divisions were held within the Wesleyan body; respect for the founder assured this. The splinterings commenced soon after his death. Small groups intent on a greater degree of lay democratic control left the parent body over the years beginning with the Kilhamite secession of 1797, but such groups had little following in Cornwall. Later divisions whose basis was revivalistic rather than democratic found a more ready degree of

acceptance in the county. It was Conference attempts to restrict unrestrained revivalism, more than notions of lay control per see which lay behind the Cornish splits.

The Rev. M.S. Edwards has listed now fewer than thirteen divisions in the county between 1802 and 1857. (8) Of these some were formed too late in the nineteenth century to have exerted much influence on the mining populace during the period which is the concern of this study, others were only temporary and ephemeral in nature.

Six of the divisions were statistically significant enough to be revealed by the 1851 census. These are listed below with the proportion of the county population which attended their services on Census Sunday. (The Mann formula of best attended plus a half plus a quarter has again been employed).

49% of the population attended some form of religious worship. The Church of England accounted for only 13.2% of total population, while the overall Methodist attendance was equal to 32%, which was comprised as follows:

Wesleyan Methodist	20.5%
Bible Christian	6.0%
Wesleyan Methodist Association	3.1%
Primitive Methodist	2.0%
Methodist New Connexion	.2%
Wesleyan Reform	.2% (9)

Clearly little importance can be attached to the last two listed which accounted for only .4% of the population between them. What is clearly revealed is the continued predominance of the parent body of Wesleyan Methodism, which was much larger in membership than the combined total of the rival connexions. In the mining districts this predominance was even greater. In 1851 73.9% of Wesleyan Methodists lived in the western half of the county, whereas only 41.8% of the second largest grouping, the Bible Christians, did. (10) The parent body was by far the most significant connexion in terms of influence over the mining communities. Its influence in view of this statistically revealed preponderance can be expected to have been considerable over the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the miners. Some influence might also be expected from the three next largest connexions,

and a brief look at their characteristics is required.

Wesleyan Methodist Association Secessions to form branches of the Wesleyan Methodist Association began in Cornwall in the late 1830's. However much of the strength of these secessions lay in non-mining regions in the east of the county. The original three circuits show the importance of the eastern districts. At Camelford in 1835, 634 out of 702 members of the Wesleyans seceeded, and at Liskeard in 1837, 425 out of 1,160. At Helston, the only one of the three circuits in the western part of the county, 343 out of 1,545 seceeded. By 1856 there were still only 3,213 members in six circuits. Influence in the mining districts must therefore be accounted slight. (11)

Bible Christians This revivalist off-shoot, founded by a Cornishman, William O'Bryan, in 1815, became the second largest Methodist division in the county, a position elsewhere held by the Primitive Methodists. Rather more than half of its membership in the county, which numbered 7,125 by 1857, (12) lay in the non-mining districts. It was in fact because he wanted freedom to evangelise the largely untouched rural districts of north Cornwall, that O'Bryan left the parent body.

The Bible Christians, or Bryanites as they were popularly known, were the most revivalistic of all the connexions. One of the sect's own historians has written:

> "... from the first, the spirit of revival was in the Church. Anyone who fails to appreciate this fact will strive in vain to understand the men and methods of the early Bible Christian Church. Every service was conducted with a view to conversions. Those early preachers believed that men, however moral, needed to experience the second birth, and they believed, however sinful might be converted there and then." (13)

Their meetings, if the Rev. Stephen Hawker of Morwenstow is to be believed, could border on the ridiculous. He describes the practice of "hunting the Devil out." The preacher, the lights having been extinguished, worked the people up into a great state of excitement. They were provided

with sticks, and a general melee ensued. "Everyone who hits, thinks he is dealing the Devil his death blow; and everyone who receives a blow believes it is a butt from the Devil's horns." Like many of Hawker's stories this one seems a little tall. It is perhaps correctly regarded as a parody by the connexion's most recent historian, who agrees, however, that the excitability of Bryanite meetings is attested from more reliable sources.* (14)

The Bryanite leader James Thorne visiting Cornwall in 1820, found, "People greatly prejudiced against my brother Samuel, because they fear he has come to stop the noise." (15) Indeed their revivalism was so strong that even the Primitive Methodist leader William Clowes, who visited the county in 1823, could not stomach it. At the mining village of Twelveheads he preached in a house, and records:

> "several of Mr. O'Brien's (sic) people were present in the worship to laugh and dance. I was grieved at their conduct, for I knew that many people, who had come to hear the preaching

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*The most famous of all miner preachers, Billy Bray, was a Bryanite. At times he certainly exhibited unrestrained enthusiasm. Accounts in the local press also testify to the impression which Bryanite gatherings were making on the populace. The West Briton reported in 1827, that a Bryanite congregation of about 120 persons holding a meeting in a loft, were so enthusiastic in their imitation of David's dancing before the Ark, that the floor gave way and they were precipitated into the barn below.
(West Briton 20th July 1827).
A few months later the same paper was reporting that the inhabitants of St. Columb were so disturbed by the noise of Bryanite meetings in a room over the market place - "What with the ravings and shrieks of the preachers and their disciples within, and the shouts and laughter of the crowds without, the place has been a perfect Babel." In an attempt to stop the nuisance the door of the meeting-room was locked, and the proprietor tried to stop the Bryanites from entering it. The report claims that he was thrust aside, and the door broken open with an iron bar.
(West Briton 5th October 1827)
Billy Bray commented on persons who looked down on his enthusiastic raptures:

> "(They) think that there is no need for as much to do as to lepe and dance and make so much noise for the Lord is not deaf and he knaw harts, and you most know that Devil is not deaf neither and yet his sarvantes make a great noise."
>
> (Methodist Archives Mss. Journal of Wm. Bray).

> were disappointed by witnessing their noise and actions." (16)

The Bryanites not only revived the enthusiasm of early Methodism, but emphasised also the puritan strain in Wesleyan attitudes, especially with regard to dress and appearance. They condemned, "Frills, chitterlings, laces and bunches." They even objected to "curling the hair, or that frightful unmanly appearance for which we want a better name, that is the turning up of the hair before, or on one side, making such an ugly appearance so contrary to the natural growth." Double breasted coats were disapproved of as, "a departure from our former simplicity." (17)

They were pioneers in the employment of female preachers, and, without doubting their sincerity in believing that women could as effectively preach the word as men, there is little doubt that they used the novelty as a means of attracting people to their meetings.

> "It is also expected that
> A Female
> will address the Congregations
> in the Afternoon and evening." (18)

proclaimed a poster advertising the opening of their first London chapel in 1826. It was this attraction which induced William Lovett to join the connexion for a while during his boyhood in Cornwall:

> "I think it was the novelty of their female preachers that first induced me and a young man - my companion - to visit their place of worship, and being there the persuasive eloquence of two young women, caused us to be impressed with the general religious enthusiasm that prevailed among the congregation." (19)

There is no evidence to suggest that the connexion exhibited any noticeable proclivity towards political radicalism. It is true that a Bryanite, Jacob Edwards, was one of the instigators of a Church Rate riot at Truro in 1838, and that he was so in association with a local radical and subsequent Chartist, Richard Spurr. (20) This remains an isolated example of such an association, and the issue of Church rates was an important one to a non-conformist tradesman like Edwards. William Lovett was a member of the

connexion but his political career began only after he had left both the Bryanites and Cornwall. A Methodist historian, with a close interest in the relationships of Methodism and radicalism, has concluded that, "no Methodist body showed less political awareness at this time than the Bible Christians." (21)

The Primitive Methodists The Primitive Methodists whose involvement in trade unionism in other mining districts, has been noticed, were never so strong in Cornwall as the Bryanites. They numbered only 2,083 in 1857, about 30% of the Bryanite membership at that date. (22) Dr. Hobsbawm has described the two sects as strikingly similar (23), and indeed they were in many respects. In the 1820's there was even an abhortive move towards union.

It has been asserted that in Cornwall, the Primitives were strong in the towns, whilst the Bryanites were in the villages. This is misleading. The true picture is not one of a rural opposed to an urban sect. In fact the Primitives were strong in some towns, while the Bryanities were strong in most towns and in many villages. (24) The social composition of their membership in areas where they were both strong was strikingly similar. The Baptismal Book of the Redruth Primitive Methodist circuit, 1843-69, reveals that 73% of the entries were miners' children. The Falmouth circuit Baptism Book of the Bible Christians 1857-62, which covers substantially the same area, also gives a percentage of 75 for miners' children. (25)

The comparative weakness of the Primitives in Cornwall was largely due to the prior establishment of the Bryanites. The latter were well established in the county by the time of the former's early missionary activities in 1825. Between 1826 and 1846, the first twenty year period when both sects were increasing, the number of meeting houses registered by the Bryanites greatly exceeded those registered by the Primitives. (26)

Primitive Methodism was revivalistic enough to have earned them the nickname of "Ranters" in many parts of the country. William Clowes preached

to lively congregations on his Cornish tour of 1825 (at St. Day he fittingly records that he had, "a shaking time", (27)) and their camp meetings added a new dimension of religious excitement. Even Clowes found Bryanite extreme enthusiasm hard to take, and it could well have been the case that the Bryanites were more other-worldly than the Primitives, less likely to have become involved in practical trade unionism and radical movements, but even for the Primitives there is no evidence to connect them with political radicalism in Cornwall. (28)

Wesleyan Methodism Few regional occupational groups were so revivalistic as the Cornish miners. Yet interesting as is the history of the revivalist sects, the majority of Methodist miners remained in the parent body. It was pointed out above that a comparison of baptismal records of the Primitives and Bryanites reveals, in both cases that miners' children accounted for 75% of the entries. The percentage of miners in the parent body was smaller. The Truro Circuit Baptism Book 1837-98, of the Wesleyans, reveals that of the first 193 entries up to January 1840, 90 parents were miners, 29 were labourers, 22 farmers, and the rest made up of a wide variety of tradesmen. (29) In absolute terms, however, there were many more Wesleyan miners, than miners of other sects. Within the mining villages, congregations would be composed almost solely of miners, and if there is any real distinction to be drawn on the grounds of social composition, it is perhaps best drawn between Wesleyan Methodism in the towns on the one hand, and village Wesleyanism and the revivalist sects on the other, rather than between Wesleyan Methodism in general and the revivalist sects.

For the large majority of Methodist miners, Wesleyan Methodism was revivalist enough. Whatever the attitude of Jabez Bunting and other Conference leaders towards revivalism, the Wesleyan congregations of the

mining villages were not easily dampened down.* The day to day services of the sects might be more exhuberant, but the parent body no less than they, experienced the widespread revivals which swept the county at periodic intervals. Bunting was well aware of this remarking at the Sheffield Conference of 1843:

> "In Cornwall there are great revivals, but in the regular work there is little done." (30)

In general it cannot be said that in terms of social composition, proclivities towards radicalism, or in revivalism, the differences between the various Methodist connexions were so significant as to preclude the use of the blanket term Methodism in describing the effects of popular religion on the Cornish mining communities in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Preachers and Leaders

The first half of the nineteenth century was the great age of the local preacher and class leader. As the influence of Methodism increased these men became figures of importance and influence in the mining villages. It was they, not the Conference leaders, who at ground level translated the movements teachings into the language of the labouring poor. There is no reason to suppose that in doing so they left it entirely unchanged. One

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*C.f. the opinion of the Rev. Henry T. Hooper as late as 1908:

> "In the town ... the minister represents the Connexion and takes over the chapel as his own ... In the village the chapel belongs to the people ... and the people take over the minister as a newcomer attached to them."

(Quoted by R. Currie, Methodism Divided (1968) 30-1)

A Methodist minister experienced this in Cornwall, in 1842, when he remarked to a local chapel leader, that the work of God was progressing well. The man replied, 'I hope you do not think that you have done it', inferring that two of the young local preachers had been the means. In 1851 his wife had remarked of the Methodists of the mining district of St. Agnes, "preachers who had preceeded us had with their families suffered most keenly through the fault finding of the people."

(Methodist Archives Fletcher-Tooth Correspondence C. Sleep to Mrs. Tooth 4th April 1842 and 30th March 1851).

does not perhaps expect to find humbly born local preachers echoing the high Tory sentiments of Jabez Bunting, or to find many who had read Dr. Adam Clarke's Filmeresque Origin and End of Civil Government, yet many of these men were more other-worldly than the leaders. Their vision centred more narrowly on the simple alternatives of Heaven or Hell: many carrying this simplification to an extent which would have horrified Wesley. It may have been fears of crude theology as much as his attachment to the Established Church which determined his early hostility to lay preaching.

It is difficult to assemble a portrait of the local preacher or class leader which does not to some degree approach a caricature. A few of those with the ability and inclination wrote autobiographies, others were eccentric or remarkable enough to merit the attention of biographers. The majority were working men who have left little trace, beyond, perhaps, a short obituary in one of the connexional magazines.

At their best the local preachers and class leaders represent the brightest side of nineteenth century Methodism. R.M. Ballantyne had this to say of a visit to a village chapel in a mining village in the 1850's:

> "the newest thing of all was to hear the preacher deliver an eloquent, earnest, able and well digested sermon, without book or note, in the same natural tone of voice with which a man might address his fellow in the street - a style of address which riveted the attention of the hearers, induced them to expect that he had really something important to say to them and that he thoroughly believed in what he said." (31)

Clearly many of the "locals" reached impressive levels of intellectual attainment, for the village chapel and its associated offices could provide both the opportunity and the motivation for self-improvement.

In a widely read study of a Yorkshire mining village, Clancy Sigal has shown how village life revolved around the pit.* So must this also have been the case in the mining villages of nineteenth century Cornwall. The

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*C. Sigal, Weekend in Dinlock (1960)

mine was the stable topic of conversation, the scene of the labour in which it was possible to take so much pride and yet impossible to be unaware of the tremendous physical toll which that labour exacted. In Sigal's village there was a means by which certain men managed to use their talents to advance their status in the village and in the eyes of their comrades. This means was provided by the local union branch. In the Cornish villages of the nineteenth century it was provided by the local chapel, which was at once an outlet for talents hitherto neglected, and a spur to fresh attainments. Miners learnt to read to be able to read the Bible and the works of Wesley, and many became leaders and preachers.

The notion of self-improvement is central to Methodism at this time and at this level. There are few cases of self-teaching from a condition of complete illiteracy. The main importance of self-improvement was that it gave the incentive to the individual to continue his education from the basis of his early instruction. In other words he became an exception to the general tendency which the 1842 Commission noted, for young persons to rapidly forget what they had learned during the brief period of elementary schooling which often preceded employment at the mines.

In providing a motivation for self-improvement, Methodism was important in two directions. It could induce in the individual as a result of the conversion process, what was known as the "serious mind" - an outlook purged of all tendency towards time consumption in any recreational sense. Conversion frequently provides the critical moment in an individual's decision to turn to serious study. Samuel Drew, the son of a tin streamer and himself a former child employee at the mines, and subsequently a shoemaker, is perhaps the outstanding example of Methodist self-improvement in nineteenth century Cornwall. He was to become known as the 'Cornish Metaphysician'. Receiving a bare elementary education as a child, he spent his childhood in what he would have later described as a sinful, idle state, but one which the modern reader would probably regard as hardly exceptional. The death of a brother

of whom he was fond, and his own narrow escape from drowning, brought him into the circle of the Methodist church:

> "thenceforward he was an altered man. He began anew the work of education, for he had almost forgotten how to read and write." (32)

Speaking of himself, Drew wrote:

> "Every leisure moment was now employed in reading one thing or another." (33)

He developed a special interest in metaphysics, because that study he felt required fewer books than others. In the beginning of his reawakened intellectual energies, he took an active interest in politics, and his workshop became a local political forum. The time consumed in political discussion, meant that he had often to work into the night to finish his orders. One night while he was thus engaged, a small boy shouted through the open door, "Shoemaker! Shoemaker! work by night and run about by day!" This was Drew's second traumatic experience. To him the voice of the small boy became the voice of God, and from that moment he dropped politics, and let the chapel be the sole outlet for the talents he was developing. He rapidly became a class leader and local preacher. (34) When after the publication of his book, Essay on the Immateriality and Immortality of the Human Soul, he became a full time writer, it was as an editor of a Wesleyan magazine and superintendant of connexional publications that he found his niche.

Drew's acquired habits of industry and application, made his advancement material as well as spiritual and social. At the end of his life he said of himself:

> "Raised from one of the lowest stations in society, I have endeavoured through life to bring my family into a state of respectability, by honest industry, frugality, and a high regard for my moral character. Divine Providence has smiled on my exertions, and crowned my wishes with success." (35)

He was in many senses exceptional. He was after all the only Cornish Methodist to have his story of achievement recognised by the award of five pages in Samuel Smiles's Self Help. It is perhaps too easy to assume that

material advancement was a necessary concomitant of self-improvement and the forms of behaviour associated with the 'serious mind'. In a well known passage in his journals, John Wesley expressed his fears for the Methodist Church if increasing wealth of its members led to decreasing godliness, and remarked:

> "the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life." (36)

Material advancement could be the natural result of self-improvement, but it was perhaps only rarely the motive. It is here that the second relationship to Methodism to self-improvement comes in. Methodism provided a purpose for self-education; a motivation which could in itself be sufficient, without any consideration of material reward. John Harris records in his autobiography:

> "Once only I entered a beerhouse alone with all the intent of drinking. Many youths of my own age and occupation were sitting there, smoking and chatting over their cups. I looked around me for a few minutes, and concluded that if I continued to visit the ale house I should grow up like these people and not advance one step beyond my present position." (37)

Harris was a labouring miner, and he remained one for many years, and thought it hardly possible that he should be anything else. Such talents as he developed while others spent their time in idle amusements would not be wasted for he was to become a local preacher, and as such gain in stature in the mining community, becoming a respected figure in the district. An aspiring poet, Harris sometimes expresses loathing for his underground employment, but his Methodism helped to reconcile him to it. He relates that when on the verge of quitting the mine, he realised:

> "I was selfish, and felt willing to submit to His will, if the mine must be my grave, so let it be; or if out of it, it was well." (38)

Miners, like William Marrish, regularly exchanged letters with friends in order to improve their literacy. Marrish was a class leader, he studied so

that he might become a better one, but never expected to be any other than an ordinary labouring miner.* (39)

Even at his best the local preacher was imbued with the quietistic spirit which characterises the autobiographical writings of such men as John Harris. At his worst, and all too frequently, he was also possessed by an exaggerated vision of sin and hellfire, a puritanical distrust of enjoyment, and a purely emotive style of preaching.**

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*C.f. R. Currie, Methodism Divided (1968) p. 46:

> "If all the offices in Methodism had been held singly, every other member could have been an office holder. In the event, one member in twelve was a local preacher or steward, one in ten a trustee, one in four a Sunday School officer or teacher. This vast officialdom created an interior social mobility within the chapel community, far more important than that exterior social mobility from rags to riches, of which Methodist historiography is so proud. Few could and did become great manufacturers, peers or cabinet ministers. But many became chapel officials and gained respectability and prestige thereby, at least within the chapel and, in certain parts of England, in society at large."

**Soli Stone, a local preacher in the mining districts in the later nineteenth century is said to have preached in a vein which would have horrified John Wesley even if it delighted the villagers of Troon, to whom he is said to have addressed the following sermon:

> "Now bretheren, I'm going to tell 'ee, this evenin' a bit about 'eaven —— 'eaven! Why what do a passel of people from up Troon knaw about 'eaven? Howsome-dever, lets ask Ahr'am bout it, 'ee bin up there a braa while. Hi ther! Ahr'am, what sort of a place is 'eaven? Tell us a bit about it can 'ee? 'Glory upon Glories, my son', (came the solemn reply) Oh that so is a? Why I thoft as much but these 'eer Troon people wouldn't believe! Now my friends lets hear what 'Lijah got to tell us."

And so on through the prophets. If his congregation seemed dull and inattentive, he would appeal for divine intervention:

> "Come down thou great Jehovah, and bring thy stone hammer along with 'ee, and soat the hard hearts of these wicked and perverse people."

(Quoted by A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, Cornwall and the Cornish (1933) 82-3).

A hearer had this to say of the sermons of another well known local preacher Richard Hampton, known as 'Foolish Dick', who preached in the mining districts in the early nineteenth century:

> "His pulpit addresses were stentorian harangues, in which, the matter was unobjectionable, though seldom indicating order or method." (40)

At the end of the nineteenth century, a writer in the Cornish Magazine recalled the local preachers of his boyhood, and their emphasis on the fate that awaited the unconverted:

> "As may be supposed such an awful doctrine dealt with by a preacher of an active imagination, and capable of clothing his ideas in vivid language, created the utmost terror in the minds of the poor, struggling, uneducated, unread people, adding intense mental misery to their many physical woes."

He described scenes in the chapel when a particular preacher of the neighbourhood preached:

> "Many times under the influence of that man's sermons, as of many others, men, women, and more particularly youths of both sexes, were so deeply affected that they rushed to the penitent pew, and in pitious tones pleaded aloud to be 'saved from the wrath to come', while the elders and members of the church shouted for joy. The din of voices at such times was deafening. Commingled with the cries of the penitents, young and old for mercy, and the elders jubilant shouts of 'Hallelujah'! 'Praise the Lord!' and 'Glory be to God!' were the stentorain tones of warning from the preacher and the sobs of many members of the congregation, who all considered that unless 'converted' they were deservedly doomed to eternal punishment in material fire

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*The hearer was not a hostile witness but the prominent Methodist layman, Thomas Garland. He also provides an interesting description of his uncle who formerly a local preacher had subsequently become a Methodist minister. This man had once been a miner, and with little or no formal schooling, he was largely self taught yet, "he would at no time have scrupled to engage single handed a whole college of Oxford tractarians." He had a low opinion of preachers who required more than seven minutes to get up a new sermon, and laboured so hard in the pulpit that, "after preaching in a close chapel to a crowded audience, (he) would come into his house as ready for a thorough change of raiment as if he had plunged into a river."

(T. Garland, Memorials, Literary and Religious (1868) 15-17)

and brimstone.

I have seen women in these chapels leap off the ground and clap their hands loudly for joy, at seeing an 'erring' 'unconverted' husband or son approach the penitent pew, and have known strong middle aged men swoon in consequence of the high pitch to which their feelings have been wrought. Almost the sole topic of conversation with those neophytes was concerning their religious experiences, all believing with Wesley that

> 'Nothing is worth a thought beneath
> But how I may escape the death
> That never, never dies.'"

The sadness of bereavement was far from softened by the preaching of such men. The writer claimed that on the death of an unconverted man, the preacher would use his demise as an awful warning:

> "Not infrequently relatives of the deceased person, whose death was made the subject of premonition to the unsaved, attended these services, fully accepting the views frankly expressed by the preacher, and at the same time grieving deeply over their relative's fearful destiny." (41)

It should not be imagined that local preachers' sermons were always terrifying, or as simple as the one from Soli Stone (footnote to p.276), Local preachers frequently possessed the ability to choose apt examples from the everyday lives of the miners, to illustrate their points. Billy Bray, the most famous of miner preachers, was capable of doing this, as the following description of one of his sermons suggests:

> "In that neighbourhood there were two mines — one very prosperous where good wages could be earned, but at the other the work was hard and the wages low, he represented himself as working at <u>that</u> mine, but on the payday, going to the prosperous one for his wages. But had he not been at work at the other mine? the manager inquired. He had, but he liked the wages at the good mine the best. He pleaded very earnestly but in vain, he was dismissed at last with the remark, from which there was no appeal, that he must come there to work if he came there for his wages. And then he turned upon the congregation and the effect was almost irresistible that they must serve Christ here, if they would share

> his glory hereafter, but if they would serve the Devil now, to him they must go for their wages bye and bye."* (42)

Preachers like Bray were able to preach in the language and imagery of their working neighbours, with rough wit they could pour scorn on extravagances of dress and behaviour, but they rarely coated the bitter pill of hell-fire. Fear was an important ingredient in the respect which the local Methodist preachers and leaders got from the villagers. The local preacher was the interpreter of God's will and purpose. Sure of his own righteousness he saw it as his function to ensure that the alternative choice of Heaven or Hell was never far from the minds of the villagers.

At times they exercised a degree of moral terrorism over their neighbours. An incident which William Carvosso, a highly respected local class leader, relates as taking place during the revival of 1826 at Mousehole, is amusing, but instructive in that it indicates the extent to which a man certain of his own salvation and of his mission to save others, could press the point on those of his neighbours, who though they might be living useful and moral lives, were unconverted and living without the benefit of 'experimental

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*F.W. Bourne's 'The King's Son'; or A Memoir of Billy Bray was a tremendously wide selling religious biography. The copy which I have, printed in 1898, was no less than the 34th edition. The work was reputed to have sold ½ million copies in the author's life time. Bray was far and away the best known of the nineteenth century locals. I recently met a retired pitman in County Durham, whose grandfather had moved north from Cornwall. He himself had never visited Cornwall, nor knew from which village his grandfather had come, but he could recite a long poem about Billy Bray.

Bray's presentation, to judge from his manuscript journal, would have been somewhat less polished than Bourne's work suggests. It is however the aptness of illustration rather than syntax which the quotation is meant to illustrate. An example of Bray's own writings is however of interest in that it suggests something of the idiom in which the man preached:

> "He was good to me when i was a sarvant of the Devel so i shold been down in hell now, But thanks be to god i am out of hell and in the way to heven, Bles his holey name if aney one have reason to speak good of the Lord 'tis me for he have done great things for me. Bles the Lord for his goodness to the Children of men."
>
> (Methodist Archives, Journal of Wm. Bray, p. 3)

religion'. Determined to save a young woman of the village, he strode towards her, and she, perceiving him and diving his purpose, not unnaturally took evasive action at his approach, but such tactics availed not against William Carvosso:

> "Desirous of shunning an interview with me, she fled by the back door. On seeing this I expressed my regret, and my inclination to follow her, I was told it would be useless as I could not overtake her; but on stepping to the front door, I saw her running into a neighbour's house. Unwilling that Satan should triumph in obtaining a victory that way, I went to the house after her. When she saw me approaching, she ran upstairs. I did not think it proper to pursue her any farther; but knowing that she was within the hearing of my voice, though I could not see her, I delivered to her my message from below stairs. And having done so, I closed my remarks by saying, 'Remember, God says, 'Except you repent, you must perish', I have now faithfully warned you of your danger, and you must meet me at the bar of God, to give account of the use you make of it.'" (43)

Carvosso's advice was eagerly sought by younger preachers and class leaders, and a letter which he wrote to one in 1829 survives:

> "I am glad to hear, the young men stand so well, and I pray that the Lord may make them abundantly more useful than ever. But I sorrow to find so many of the young females giving their company to young men who are carnal and without religion. This you know, my dear Joseph, is quite opposed to the word of God. He commands us to 'be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers'. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?
>
> Have you, my dear brother, explained to the young people who meet in your classes, the awful consequences of breaking this command of God? You see it is as much forbidden by him as any other sin. To plead the commonness of it will noways do away with the evil of it." (44)

It was to the relatively unsophisticated village congregations that the less erudite of the local preachers addressed their message. Taken away from the closed community of the local Bethels, where their eccentricities were known, and where erudition was neither expected nor desired from them, they could become but shorn Sampsons, fearing their ability to vanquish

Philistines better armed in dress and education than themselves. Thomas Garland described in a letter to a friend, the experience of a local, who, during temporary repairs to his local chapel, preached in one of the larger town chapels:

> "It put our locals a little upon the stretch, doing their very best before such a congregation. Among others ***** was to preach, and had prepared, I believe, with more than usual care. He got on pretty well so far as the text, and then stuck fast. The sermon had made to itself wings and flown away. He talked ten minutes about no one knows what, and then closed —— then gave out a hymn, and before finishing one verse went to another —— then tried to pray and could not." (45)

It should not be imagined that the locals had complete freedom to preach in the manner of their choice. Even in so revivalist a sect as the Bible Christians control of a kind was exerted in the mid-nineteenth century through the quarterly circuit meetings of the local preachers. The minute books of these meetings from 1859 to the 1870's survive for the Truro circuit, and from them an idea of the concern with local preaching practices can be obtained.

In March 1860, the meeting accepted Brother Thomas's resignation because, "he is so far from any of our chapels, and he wishes to attend to his family more." In December of the same year it was minuted that, "Brother Woolcock see Br. Pearce and talk to him on the improvement of his mind so as to render himself more acceptable as a preacher." In June 1861, Brother Hawken was asked to see a Brother Walker on the matter of his preaching and, "tell him that he must not preach so long and that he must try to improve or otherwise he will not be accepted as a local preacher." Sometimes the meeting had to concern itself with doctrinal deviance, as in 1862, when Brother Woolcock was asked to converse with Joseph Rowe, "on the Doctrine of Christ's intermission, he having on more than one occasion said in preaching that Christ does not intercede for sinners, but only for penitents and believers, a sentiment, in our opinion not in harmony, with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures on that subject." In 1865 a Sister Williams asked to be relieved

of her duties, reminding us of the employment of female preachers by the Bible Christians. In 1867 Brother Keast was permitted to accept very few appointments in the approaching quarter because, "He will be employed at the mine the 19th January, and every fourth Sunday from that time." Brother Simmons was dropped from the plan in 1869, because he had left the connexion, and had, "displayed an ungenerous spirit towards us." (46)

This element of control is impressive, but it remains true that the worth of a preacher was still measured in terms of the number of souls which he saved. It was said of the Bible Christians by an historian who was himself a member of that sect, that:

> "They preached for conversions, and if any man or woman exercised a ministry which was not divinely sealed by the known salvation of souls, there was the most painful heart-searching." (47)

Any local preacher whose success was apparent in the number of saved souls which he could claim and in the size of the congregations which he could draw, was unlikely to be much censured by the quarterly committees whatever his level of sophistication unless on a doctrinal matter.

The devotion of the locals and leaders is impressive as is their determination. Prodigious efforts at self-improvement testify to the awakening of dormant mental energies which the service of Methodism was capable of provoking. Nevertheless it should be remembered, that it was a cause motivated self-improvement with consequently limited intellectual horizons. Reading material was very circumscribed. Only that which tended towards the good of the soul was permissible. Wesley himself had doubted the profitability of his only visit to the British Museum:

> "What an immense field the British Museum gives for curiosity to range in! But what account will a man give to the Judge of the quick and the dead for a life spent in collecting all these?" (48)

In 1875, the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse described the library of a village class leader. The man was fictitious, but was intended to represent all that

was good in the local leader:

> "There, bending over his lapstone, hammering, stitching, always busy, sat Brother Dan'el; ever ready too with a book before him. We could almost guess its title, for the stock is limited, and the reading is a slow process, carefully digesting each sentence as it comes. The out —— and —— out favourite of all, Sunday and weekday, is Wesley. There the volumes stand upon a shelf above the door —— the Notes, the Sermons, the Journals, and beside them two or three volumes of the Christian Library. Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, is the most enriched with traces of soiled thumb and forefinger. There too is Josephus, and Treffry's Eternal Sonship, relieved by smaller volumes of Methodist biography." (49)

Daniel Quorm's bookshelf was typical. It was theological in content; it was procured from the itinerant preachers who brought the books into the villages, and it was put to the service of Methodism.

References

(1) Quoted by Rev. H. Miles Brown, Methodism and the Church of England in Cornwall 1738-1838 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London 1947) p. 170
(2) Old Cornwall Vol. 5 Pt. 12 (1961) p. 519
(3) Membership figures from minutes of Wesleyan Conference. Attendance figures from Census of Great Britain: Religious Worship - England and Wales P.P. 1852-3 Vol. lxxxix p. cxcix Table C
(4) See T. Shaw, History of Cornish Methodism (Truro 1967) p. 98
(5) Miles Brown opp. cit. p. 169 and Shaw opp. cit. p. 11
(6) P.P. 1842 (Children) p. 760 Report of Barham
(7) Shaw opp. cit. p. 78
(8) M.S. Edwards, The Divisions of Cornish Methodism (1964) 2-9
(9) Shaw opp. cit. p. 96
(10) R. Currie, 'A Micro-Theory of Methodist Growth' Proceedings of the Wesleyan Historical Association Vol. xxxvi (Oct. 1967) p. 72
(11) Edwards opp. cit. p. 5
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(14) T. Shaw, The Bible Christians (1965) p. 86
(15) S. Thorne, James Thorne of Shebbear (1873) p. 168
(16) T. Shaw, The Bible Christians (1965) 85-6
(17) Pyke opp. cit. 63-4
(18) ibid. facing p. 46
(19) W. Lovett, Life and Struggles etc. (Tawney ed. 1920) p. 22
(20) See a full description of the incident in Annual Register 1839, Chronicle 51-4
(21) M.S. Edwards, 'Bible Christians, Political Radicals and Cornish Methodism' Jnl. of Cornish Methodist Historical Association Vol. ii No. 7 (May 1967) 4-5

(22) M.S. Edwards, The Divisions of Cornish Methodism (1964) p. 4
(23) E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (Manchester 1959) p. 155
(24) M.S. Edwards, Divisions etc. 4-5
(25) J.C.C. Probert, The Sociology of Cornish Methodism (1964) 34-6
(26) See the list of licenses for meeting houses in Journal of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association Vol. ii No. 5 (May 1966) 115-19
(27) J. Petty, History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion (1880) p. 196
(28) This conclusion is reached by Mr. J.C.C. Probert in his Primitive Methodism in Cornwall (1966) p. 114
(29) J.C.C. Probert, The Sociology of Cornish Methodism (1964) p. 36
(30) B. Gregory, Sidelights of the Conflicts of Methodism during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century (1898) p. 343
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(39) See W.D. Tyack, The Miner of Perransabuloe (1866) for an account of Murrish's efforts at self-improvement
(40) T. Garland, Memorial Literary and Religious (1868) p. 5
(41) F.E.A. in Cornish Magazine Vol. ii (1898) p. 224 et seq.
(42) F.W. Bourne, The King's Son; or, A Memoir of Billy Bray (1898 ed.) pp. 25-6
(43) B. Carvosso (ed.) A Memoir of Mr. William Carvosso (1837) 261-2
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(46) C.R.O. Truro Mss. DDMR/T 131 Truro Circuit Preachers Minute Book
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Conversion and Revivalism

Lecky said of Methodism:

> "A more appalling system of religious terrorism, one more fitted to unhinge a tottering intellect and to darken and embitter a sensitive nature has seldom existed." (1)

Little which has been said so far explains why he should have delivered such a verdict on the movement. Judgements of this nature direct attention to the psychological aspects of Methodism, in particular to the central process known as conversion.

To the early Methodists simply to live a blameless moral life, believe sincerely in Christ, and regularly attend divine worship was not enough. The would be member of the Methodist society had to become fully 'converted' to God. The word itself implying a drastic change in attitudes and behaviour patterns. In the pages of the Methodist Magazine and similar connexional publications, we read strange sounding descriptions of the lives of adherents; for example; "For nearly fifty-five years he lived without the enjoyment of experimental religion, although irreproachable in his outward conduct" (2) and of another, "It is to be feared that his parents knew little of experimental godliness, although according to general admission they were strictly moral." (3) Both of these passages are from obituary notices of Cornish Methodists. William Carvosso's description of how he secured the conversion of his son makes the same distinction between moral outward behaviour and true conversion:

> "I now began to feel a particular concern for the salvation of my younger son ... His life was quite moral; I could not reprove him for any outward sin. In his leisure hours his delight was in studying different branches of useful knowledge; but this, though good in its place, was not religion; I knew his heart was yet estranged from God, ... I accordingly came to him on one occasion when he was as usual engaged with his books; and with my heart deeply affected, I asked him if it was not time for him to enter upon a life of religion. I told him with tears, that I felt my body was failing, and that if anything would distress my mind in a dying

> hour, it would be the thought of closing my eyes in death before I saw him converted to God. This effort the Lord was pleased to bless; the truth took hold of his heart; he went with me to the class meeting, and soon obtained the knowledge of salvation by the remission of his sins." (4)

Extensive quotation from many biographies and autobiographies of individual conversion experiences would demonstrate the nature of the process. However, the pattern is so strikingly similar and consistent that a model can legitimately be constructed.

1) The potential convert becomes increasingly concerned about his spiritual welfare. In the peculiar phraseology, he comes 'serious'.

2) Under the pressures of a preacher or class leader (or parent) or following mass example at a revival, he becomes 'convinced' that he is a sinner of the vilest kind, and that unless he receives God's assurance that his sins are forgiven, he is high bound for Hell. This stage known as 'conviction' is the one frequently accompanied by sighs, moans, groans etc. as the would be convert engages in his struggle with the Devil. It often culminates in mental exhaustion. A period of intense anguish, it could last several days, it might be drawn out over months, or it might be over very quickly in the fervour of a revival meeting.*

3) Finally under the guidance of the preacher or leader, the process culminates in the convert finding his assurance that God has forgiven his sins. He is now filled with relief and in some cases almost manic joy. The conversion process is complete.

It has been noted that nervous exhaustion was experimentally shown by Pavlov to be one of the conditions which apparently led to the destruction of

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*A social psychologist has remarked of this stage:

> "Obviously conversion is based upon mental conflict and a feeling of inadequacy, otherwise there would be no point in changing one's beliefs."
>
> (J.A.C. Brown, Techniques of Persuasion (Penguin 1963) p. 224)

old brain patterns and their replacement by new ones. (5) Conversion marked a profound cesura in the life of the individual. Change was manifested in orderly behaviour, and reflected in outward appearance: "The gay young lady was entirely changed. She was as one cloathed with sack cloth and ashes," runs the description of one Cornish convert. (6) Old companions were given up, former amusements forsaken, and only activities which promoted the good of the soul were indulged. The conversion process has been described by Edward Thompson as:

> "a phenomenon, almost diabolic in its penetration into the very sources of human personality, directed towards the repression of emotional and spiritual energies. But 'repression' is a misleading word; these energies were not so much inhibited as displaced from expression in personal and in social life, and confiscated for the service of the Church." (7)

Conversion was no guarantee of salvation if the life lead after it did not approach perfection, and there were many lapses, and many subsequent re-conversions, but the place which the process occupied in determining the attitudes and behavioural characteristics of the Methodists was a central one, although many who regularly attended Methodist forms of worship never experienced it, none could be unaware of its importance.

The co-incidence of activities and attitudes which the Methodists called 'sinful' and which the capitalist would call 'unproductive', is an aspect of the subject which is discussed in a later chapter. (below pp 259-64).

Revivals

In any discussion of Cornish Methodism, the nature and form of the periodic religious revivals must be considered. These were essentially periods of mass conversions, when large numbers were added to Methodist societies over a short period.* They were normally accompanied by mass displays of the

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*During the 1831 revival the Camborne and Redruth circuits received an accession of 1,700 members within four months. (Cornwall Gazette 23rd April, 1831).

conversion characteristics of sighs, groans, convulsive fits etc. They lasted for several months and were often followed by a sharp decline in membership, although generally of smaller dimensions than the original increase.

Years which saw widespread revivals in west Cornwall were, 1764, 1782, 1798, 1814, 1824, 1831-33, 1839, 1841-42, with smaller ones in 1848-49 and a revival period between 1862 and 1865. Up to the Great Revival of 1814, they occurred at roughly sixteen year intervals, thereafter incidence becomes much more frequent. On a closer analysis the pattern is not quite so clear cut. Firstly the dates represent the dates of sudden explosions of religious enthusiasm, but the upward trend may well have continued for several years before the actual revival took place. The following membership figures for the Helston and Penzance circuits indicate this:

	Penzance	Helston	
1806	1,278	824	
1807	1,210	861	
1808	1,287	864	
1809	1,372	906	
1810	1,384	955	
1811	1,363	1,080	
1812	1,612	1,280	
1813	2,247	2,000	
1814	2,500	3,288	(8)

The importance of the 1814 revival is much more marked in the case of Helston, but here too, the explosion followed a marked build up. The total membership figures for west Cornwall before the revival of 1824 show a similar pattern:

1820	8,951	
1821	8,823	
1822	9,125	
1823	9,170	
1824	11,041	(9)

It must be emphasised that revivals do not in every case stand out clearly from the annual figures published by the Conference of society membership. In the first place these are annual figures, and a major revival might have been characterised by large additions in a matter of weeks. In the second place if a revival took place towards the end of a year, then the numerical evidence would have to be sought in the year following, or indeed

the timing of the revival might have been such that the recorded numerical increase is split between two years.

A further complicating factor is that the years in which a revival occurred might vary from circuit to circuit, and smaller revivals unconnected with the bigger ones might occur in individual areas in the intervening periods. Since revivals spread by contagion from one circuit to another, there might be a period of several months between the outbreak of the revival in one place and the peak of its intensity in another. A particular revival might therefore appear in different year's membership returns for different societies.

Nevertheless a pattern of sorts can be tentatively put forward. The widespread revivals occurred regularly, with decreasing intervals after 1814, but the longest period between any two major outbreaks was the 18 years from 1764 to 1782. The increasing frequency in the nineteenth century may reflect the fact that with population and society membership growing much larger there was a greater supply of potential converts awaiting conversion.

The external features of a Cornish revival will be described before any attempt at a causal explanation of their occurrence is made.

The revival of 1764 broke out while Thomas Rankin was the itinerant in the Redruth circuit, and a brief description of it occurs in his memoir in the Methodist Magazine:

> "The work of God more or less prospered in every society in the county. In two or three months, hundreds were added to the societies in the West, and many savingly brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; many backsliders were restored, and a most wonderful change took place in every parish where the gospel was preached. Most of the country villages were like Eden, and as the garden of the Lord. It was not uncommon for ten or twenty to find peace with God in one day, or at one sermon, or love feast, in many places." (10)

The revival of 1782 began in the December of the previous year at St. Just, and the following description from the Arminian Magazine describes its features and course:

> "In December 1761, many persons met at Gabriel Thomas's house in St. Just church-town in order to sing and pray. In a little time several began to cry aloud, and would not be comforted; and some struggled in the agonies of death; one of whom fainted away. They continued in prayer until the preaching began at five in the morning, and six of the mourners found peace with God. Some were also deeply distressed for full salvation: but they were not yet set at liberty.
>
> On Tuesday December the 25th, many met at three in the morning at Gabriel Thomas's. The power of the Lord fell upon them, so that six were as if in agony; two of whom were soon filled with peace. At seven they removed to the preaching house, where the same power was present. They continued in prayer until about nine. In that time four more found a sense of pardon. They met there again in the evening, and very soon began to cry for mercy. But two women, who though they had been long in the society, were not convinced of sin, were much offended, saying, 'It is all hypocrisy'. In a short time, the cries of the mourners were turned into praise: at this they were still more offended. But in about two hours they were both cut to the heart, and cried out as loud as any. About one o'clock God put a new song in their mouths. About seven, the meeting broke up; but not before eleven more were enabled to declare that their sins were blotted out.
>
> During all February, the work of God went on with power, many were justified and some sanctified. It was about this time that four score persons were justified in one week ..." (11)

The revival continued throughout the following months.

Scenes of mass hysteria were commonplace. At the height of the revival of 1831-32 the following scene was described:

> "The scene at this time was truely affecting. The loud and piercing cries of the broken hearted penitents drowned the voice of prayer, and all that could be done at this stage of the meeting was to stand still and see the salvation of God. At length the penitents were conducted and upheld, each of them by two persons, into one part of the chapel. And now when their cries and groans were concentrated, one of the most affecting scenes appeared before the people. Their humble wailings pierced the skies. Sometimes a burst of praise from the pardoned penitents mingled with the loud cries of the broken hearted; and this greatly encouraged those that were in distress." (12)

At the height of the revival, the preacher records:

> "The chapel was crowded almost to suffocation. The steam ran down the walls; the gallery stairs were flooded with it; and had not all the windows been

> opened, every light would have gone out. The people were yet determined to enter into this kingdom; yet everyone suppressed his feelings as long as he could. When any have cried out, it has been the involuntary burst of a soul overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and a sense of danger. The seats in many places were literally covered with tears. This night the preacher concluded the first service about eight o'clock; but scarcely any left the chapel. From that hour till nearly eleven the people were crying out for mercy in every part of the chapel, both in the gallery and below. Nearly fifty found peace that night; and more than double that number returned home weary and heavy laden. Many of these continued in prayer all night; and not a few during the night found peace in their own houses." (13)

The most widespread and spectacular of the revivals was that of 1814, known as the Great Revival. A contemporary description gives an idea of the extent and intensity of this revival:

> "It began ... in the parish of Gwennap, and then extended to Redruth, where about the twentieth of February, the Lord was pleased to pour out such a measure of his Holy Spirit upon the people, that the chapel doors were not shut till the Monday or Tuesday se'nnight after. During this time, it is said, hundreds were converted to God and set at liberty, so that their change appeared as raised from death to life. For at their first conviction the people dropped down as dead, and became quite stiff, and after some time revived again, and the first words were, 'Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us', and this repeated (in some cases) not only for hours, but for days, till the Lord on whom they called, sent salvation in an answer of peace to their souls. Such a sight as the chapel of Redruth afforded, and the other towns and parishes in succession was never witnessed here. Men crying with loud and bitter cries, till the anguish of their souls had opened every pore of the body, and produced a perspiration which fell from their face to the ground. From this you may form some idea of their distress, and the holy violence used in entering the strait gate. Almost all temporal business was at a stand, and the shops mostly shut up. When market day came there was scarce any buying or selling, for all were 'labouring for the bread which endureth to eternal life'. The cries for mercy were not confined to the chapel, but extended to the streets, and men and women were seen ... in the streets, supported on each side from the chapel to their houses, for they could neither stand nor walk, and were not ashamed to, 'cry to Him who is able to save'. In Redruth circuit alone, ... they have added two thousand to the society." (14)

The mines themselves became scenes of prayer and agonised searching after

conversion. (15) So striking were the scenes of this revival, that many were said to believe it was preparatory to the end of the world. (16) Not only chapels and mines, but houses, barns and stables became scenes of frantic prayer.* (17)

William Jenkin, a Quaker mine steward, described the revival from the stand point of an observer who was not of the society:

> "It continued for a few weeks, when the great noise subsided, but the fire still existed. The same extraordinary agitation extended to divers neighbouring parishes exactly similar to what it was in this. (Redruth) But the great current seemed to run westward. It was not so very rapid or noisy about Truro and its vicinity, as it was in the parish of Gwennap. At Illogan and Camborne it was more violent. But at Hayle Copper works and the adjoining villages (taking in Wheal Alfred mine) the agitation was extremely so —— at the latter mine are about 800 labourers at the surface (male and female) chiefly young people, where the torrent bore down everything that stood in its way. Were I to attempt to describe it I could not find words sufficient to draw it in colours strong enough. All labour for some days was suspended, and the underground labourers (equally as numerous as those at the surface) seemed to be struck with the same power —— but being more advanced in years, I think they appeared to have a greater mastery over their passions than the others had. From that neighbourhood it extended westwards to Marazion and Penzance."

Jenkin concludes by saying that although people did not all see religion alike in some respects, "yet who can but rejoice on seeing the apparent marks of outward reformation." (18)

With the exception of the Jenkin description, the ones given above are taken from printed Methodist sources, and therefore to a certain extent were meant to serve a propaganda purpose, notwithstanding the fact that they tend

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*C.f. a description of the 1831 revival:

> "It is not merely at the Chapel they are thus affected, it is also while they are at their work in the bowels of the earth ... that the spirit strives with them. They come up from their work and explain to Captain M or whatever the captain's name may be, we cannot work, we must cry for mercy!"
>
> (Methodist Archives. Fletcher-Tooth Correspondence C. Sleep to Mrs. Tooth, St. Agnes 30th March 1831).

to repel rather than attract the modern reader. The description which follows of the 1824 revival is taken from a private letter which was not printed:

> "A glorious revival of religion has again commenced in this part of the West very similar to that which was witnessed here about ten years ago and the extention (sic) of which is already truely astonishing. It was chiefly confined to the Redruth circuit for a season but it is now much more diffusive. Its first beginnings were observed and felt at a Prayer meeting held at Redruth Highway ... To this favoured spot multitudes resorted ... and were seized with powerful convictions. Many whole nights were spent in prayer and great numbers found peace with God ... It is supposed that the place contains about 200 houses and it is reported by our friends that there is not more than five of these dwellings in which family worship is not now regularly observed ...
>
> The work has extended to a place called Bridge two or three miles north west. Many nights the people have been together in supplication and praise. At Illogan Highway, Stythians, Carnkie, Harris's Mill, North Country and in the town of Redruth ... the chapel was thronged to excess ... But the work is not considered by the people to be properly come there yet.
>
> In the Truro Circuit a marvellous work has commenced within the last few days, the names of the places are Gwennap and Mount Hawke —— here they are day and night in prayer. In this circuit (Helston) we are not destitute of precious influence, especially at Constantine and Trewithick ..." (19)

The Chartist missionary, Robert Lowery, provides us with a contrasting hostile description of the 1839 revival at St. Ives:

> "A large chapel was full of people; there was an open space within the door in front of the pews, where a number of people —— neighbours who had slipped out without hats or bonnets, as they would to see a passing sight —— were looking coolly on and passing their remarks. They had not caught the enthusiasm. But all within the pews were in a state of delerium. Amidst the confusion of tongues it was impossible to connect coherently the utterances. There were three persons in the pulpit, one of whom was preaching, or rather uttering unconnected exclamations. In the gallery some were singing raptuously, others were praying aloud. Similar proceedings were taking place under the gallery, and in the body of the chapel. I shall never forget the sight we observed in one of the large pews close by us. A young woman was 'smitten' as they call it. She was uttering loud, passionate, and convulsive exclamations of grief, and tearing her hair, which

> hung dishevelled round her neck. Afterwards she sank on the ground, exhausted, panting for breath, and foaming at the mouth. There were two men, beside her, not at all excited themselves, who coolly watched her emotions, and excited her as if they were merely applying galvanism. One of them particularly disgusted us. There were no traces of honest fanaticism in his looks; on the contrary he was cold and calculating, and of a 'Fagin-like' Jew appearance, and seemed fit for any dark deed. When her spent nature could no longer utter ravings, and seemed to be recovering its reason, he would kneel down by her and exclaim close to her ear 'Shout! Shout! Shout! there is no quietness until the devil is cast out, and then you will find mercy.'" (20)

It would be superfluous to describe the features of each of the revivals, enough has been said to illustrate the phenomenology of the revival. Some attempt at providing a theory of causation is required. What was responsible for the pattern of recurrent revivalism?

The first fact to establish is that the revivals of the eighteenth century do not co-incide with the visits of John Wesley. Even the widespread revival of 1782-83 broke out before he arrived in the county in 1782, as is proved by a letter he wrote in July of that year from London:

> "I must see them in the West of Cornwall, where there is a great revival of the work of God." (21)

Secondly there is no clear connexion with bad harvest years. The beginning of the revival of 1831 is the only time that a revival comes in a food crisis year. They do not tie in with the prosperity of the mining industry. Dr. Rowe has suggested that they do occur in times which can be described as exciting and disturbing (1798 and 1814, the French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars, threats of invasion; 1831-32, Parliamentary reform; 1839, Chartism). (22) But such stretched explanations which are far too general, may be unnecessary. The pattern could be determined by social physchological and cultural factors rather than by economic or political ones.

The longest gap between major revivals is the eighteen years from 1764 to 1782, the four succeeding revivals are separated by sixteen year gaps. This sixteen year gap is roughly paralleled by the age cohort 12 to 28, which

is the period between adolescence and the normal age limit for first marriages. The evidence suggests that this was the most likely time for an individual to undergo conversion. The spacing of revivals was such that every individual might expect to experience one sometime between his twelfth birthday and his late twenties. A revival could thus function as a means of joining young persons to the church. This is not to say that revivals were necessarily deliberately staged with this end in view, as a planned step in the entering into full church membership of the successive generations. What is suggested is that revivals did fulfil this functional role, whether any deliberation was present or not. As the conversion of young people, the children of Methodist parents, comes to be expected, at any time there will exist a reservoir of 'serious' or expecting to be converted penitents. The example of one such penitent, experiencing his conviction of sin, and seeking conversion, could serve to break the dam, and a flood of conversions ensue which spread by example through the circuit.

An American scholar has written of the revivals of the 'Burned-over' district of New York State in the eighteen-thirties and forties:

> "Revivals did not customarily bring outsiders into the church so much as they promoted the hopeful onlookers to the sanctity of church membership. Most of the persons usually described by Baptist and Presbyterian clergymen as irreligious, immoral or profane went to church regularly and expected at some future time to experience conversion during a revival."* (23)

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*Dr. Kent has similarly written on American revivalism:

> "It was natural for the local pastor to try by preaching to produce the necessary signs of conversion in the young people of his congregation. If he succeeded the revival, or awakening as it was sometimes called, would spread by what was soon recognised as a kind of psychological contagion through the closely interwoven community of the town... Once the whole place had fallen into a ferment, other nearby towns might seek to emulate it."
>
> (John Kent, 'American Revivalism and England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 5 Papers Presented to the 'Past and Present' Conference on Popular Religion 7th July, 1966).

If this theory has any value in the study of Cornish revivalism, then several forms of evidence will have to exist. Firstly it will have to be shown that there was a preponderance of converts in the required age cohort. Secondly it will need to be shown that a fair percentage of them were of Methodist parentage, and thirdly it would be useful supporting evidence if it could be shown that prior to a revival, there was a feeling of the need for one on the part of the older members.

The converts of the 1814 revival were thus described:

> "The subjects of this work are various: though perhaps the greatest number are young persons of both sexes, from about fourteen to twenty-eight years of age, and of the labouring classes of society." (24)

Most of the converts at the revival of 1825 were said to be young people; "some even so young as ten or twelve years of age." (25) At the Truro revival of 1847, it was observed of the converts:

> "Generally speaking, they were young persons between fifteen and thirty years of age. Comparatively few older than thirty years were among the number."

It further appeared that:

> "although some notoriously wicked and profligate persons have been awakened and renewed, by far the largest portion of the new converts consists of young persons, previously steady in their habits, regular members of the Wesleyan congregation in this town, and many of them, children of officers and others belonging to the church."* (26)

At the St. Just revival of 1851, a similar tendency was observed:

> "In fact it may be conjectured that a large number of the converts of revivals consist of well-disposed persons upon whose minds the Spirit of God has long been operating and who were only waiting the guiding hand of Christian sympathy to become decidedly religious." (27)

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*Amongst adult converts made a number would be re-conversions. John Radford noted that of the converts made in the early days of the 1824 revival at Redruth Highway, the majority were backsliders.
(Methodist Archives Fletcher-Tooth Correspondence John Radford to Mrs.Tooth 30th Jan. 1824).

It remains to be seen whether revivals were preceded by a prior period of expectation. Shortly before the revival of 1831-32 we are told, that after the Conference of 1831, "a spirit of expectation appeared to come upon the minds of the people." (28) Of the Great Revival of 1814, we read:

> "... it came not without observation. Indeed for some considerable time past, our friends were led to pray earnestly and in faith for a revival of God's work among us, and they felt encouragement by the addition of some members to the classes, by the still increasing numbers of our stated hearers, and by the solemn attention which marked all our assemblies." (29)

We are also told that prior to the outbreak of the revival, "more than usual seriousness was perceptible among the people, and their assemblies were characterised by great solemnity." (30)

Once a revival had broken out, then neighbouring societies were naturally put into a state of expectation that they would soon experience it themselves. A miner writes of the revival of 1856:

> "Well, hearing of revivals around us, and feeling the want of one for ourselves and the people, we agreed three weeks ago, to have special services. We kept them on the first week without any apparent result, and some said, 'there will be no revival at Bolingy, they are too dead etc.' But God had put it into the hearts of the people to pray, and he by his spirit can quicken, —— Blessed be his name! There was more of divine influence in one evening ... (and then) it went through the meeting like fire." (31)

Similarly at Truro towards the end of 1846, the need for a revival was felt:

> "It was unanimously agreed that the leaders should meet together at half past five every Sunday evening, to intercede with God for his blessing upon the preaching of the Gospel, and especially on the Sabbath evening service. On following Sunday this resolution was put into practice, and the spirit of grace and of supplications was abundantly vouchsafed to the brethren present. An unusal degree of life and power attended the preaching of the word, and we were lead to hope for better things." (32)

The phenomena of fainting, shrieks, and uncontrollable depression which characterised revivals were produced by a form of preaching which often

amounted to emotional terrorism.* There is a tendency on the part of Methodist historians to play down the role of fear in revivalist preaching. Contemporary Methodist writers made no bones about admitting this fact. George Smith, the movement's historian, who was a Cornishman and spoke from first hand experience, had no doubts:

> "We can only expect as a general rule, to find those extraordinary displays of grace accompanying a clear, distinct and faithful preaching of Gospel truth. We may say even more than this; we have seldom seen these signs follow any preaching in which the great practical truths bearing on human salvation — such as man's danger through the guilt of sin, the necessity of instant repentence, justification by faith alone in the atonement of Christ, the privilege and duty of personal holiness, and the like — have not been made exceedingly prominent."

He goes on to say that the awakened sinner 'trembling in agony' beneath God's frown, could hardly be expected to control his emotions. (33)

During the 1814 revival it was said that some, 'convinced that they are sinful, perishing, helpless creatures ... are driven to the throne of mercy by terror. (34) A witness said he could give no other idea of this revival than "a shipwreck where all were certain of being swallowed up in the waves." (35)

A writer in the Cornish Banner discussed at length the accusations of impropriety which were being levelled against Cornish revivals, and concluded:

> "But would such persons have no excitement in religion? Men possess feeling as well as intellect, and should be judged accordingly. Tell a man that he is in danger every hour of being dragged from his beloved wife and children by the officers of the law to be cast into prison, and is he not excited? Nor would any Christian think his excitement out of place; but on the contrary would be shocked to perceive apathy under such affecting circumstances. And will

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*C.f. the following description of the 1842 revival:

> "Stout hearted men from the mines come to the prayer meetings and with tears streaming over their faces, and in great agony they fall down on their knees and wrestle till they have found mercy."
>
> (Methodist Archives Fletcher-Tooth Correspondence C. Sleep to Mrs. Tooth Helston 4th April, 1842).

> be have a man told solemnly and authoritively that he is a rebel against God, and every moment in danger of being cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and not excited? What! must a wretched sinner see his sin in its deepest hues, with all its circumstances of aggravation, and his immortal soul on the crumbling verge of Hell and not be excited?" (36)

It is not intended that the theory of revival causation advanced in this chapter should be regarded as a comprehensive theory applying to all forms of religious revivalism in all places at all times. It is offered as an explanation of the phenomenon of recurrent revivalism in an area where Methodism was already a dominant cultural factor in the environment.

If it is accepted that an inbuilt necessity for periodic revivals is a characteristic of such a religiously oriented community, then the occasion for a revival can be sought in a variety of events; some undoubtedly economic, or even connected with political tension, but others undoubtedly not. Occasion might be trivial as in Robert Lowery's explanation of the 1839 revival at St. Ives. Given a previous period of expectation and anticipation, it does not seem at all impossible that as Lowery suggests an accidental misinterpretation of children's play could spark off a revival:

> "The population possesses all the materials for such explosions being full of warm religious feeling, which overrules knowledge. Their daily language and the religious services they attend are replete with rapturous exclamations. Perhaps the mother is out on some errand, she has left the children to play with those of a neighbour until she returns. Eye and Eye in imitation of their elders, they begin singing a hymn and uttering the expressions which they have heard at chapel. In the midst of this the mother returns. Her patrenal (sic) feelings are delighted, and she exclaims, 'Bless the Lord!' She joins the hymn, calls in her neighbours, who become similarly affected, and the enthusiasm spreads from house to house, then the chapel is sought, and the whole neighbourhood are (sic) infected." (37)

There is no denial that even if revivals should be considered as expected occurrences in the religious life of the community, that the precise point of outbreak might well follow a period of seriousness deepened by economic

depression. Even in times of prosperity, however, revivalism of the Cornish kind, was essential for the religious health of the community, but it might still have been more effective in bad times.

The 1826 revival at Mousehole broke out at a time when there had been no fish caught for some time. (38) But even more striking as an example of a link between revivalism and a depressed state of mind on the part of the populace, is provided by Thomas Collins's account of the 1848 revival at Camborne:

> "About this time mighty wonders were wrought by the Holy Ghost. A revival broke out which swayed the people through several circuits with extraordinary power. There had been much prayer and much general preparedness; but the approach of pestilence brought things to a point. A few fatal cases occurred at Illogan, Redruth and at Camborne. The dread name of Cholera seemed to awake the people like a trumpet of doom. Anxiety became deep and general. In many places, such numbers flocked at all hours to the chapels, that their doors could not be closed for days together." (39)

But although Cholera was largely responsible for the immediate timing of the revival, and undoubtedly added to the intensity of popular feeling, it should be noted that Collins speaks of a state of "general preparedness" existing before the revival reached Camborne, and further, that a revival had already been experienced in the Truro circuit, before there was any fear of pestilence.

One should not ignore the fact that the periodic revival also provided a break in the ordinary routine of life,* and an exciting break at that, however serious its purpose may have been. J.H. Rigg who was a Methodist minister in west Cornwall in the 1840's had this to say of the miners:

> "They could hardly have too many meetings, and in their meetings shouting and ecstacies were rather

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*The break was a real one. During a revival at Bodmin in 1835, the Wesleyan chapel was thrown open for a fortnight, with constant prayer meetings from five to seven-thirty in the morning and beginning in the evening at 7.0 p.m. and kept up until between one and two o'clock in the morning. (Cornish Guardian 20th March 1835)

> the rule than the exception. They had given up the public-house —— they had now something better to cheer them than dreams of smuggled spirits —— they felt no need and had no thought of theatre or dancing room. All the relief, the refreshment, the congenial excitement of their underground life they found in the preaching-house or in the class-room. There they let themselves go; they shouted they wept, they groaned, they not seldom laughed aloud, with a laugh of intense excitement, a wonderful laugh." (40)

If the every day round of services and meetings could generate this degree of emotional excitement, then how much more could the revivals which affected whole communities at periodic intervals?

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ASPECTS OF VILLAGE LIFE

"But the Wesleyan chapel, so spacious remains
Still the noblest feature the village contains,
Its structure is plain, but commanding its site,
Cabarrack regards it with conscious delight." (1)

This verse of a local poet was written in 1845, by which date the physical dominance of the chapel in many of the mining villages was becoming equalled by its cultural dominance.

The mine was the natural centre of the economic life of the village. It was also of course much more. It provided the material needs of life for the villagers, and it brought physical damage and early death to the menfolk. The respect in which the mine was held was based on these two fears: the fear that its mineral resources would run out and it would cease to be the provider, and the fear constantly present that menfolk would be brought home injured or dead. Metal mining did not carry with it the same threat of mass disasters as coal mining, for the explosive gases present in coal mines are not so in metal mines. There were nevertheless occasions when disasters did occur, such as at East Wheal Rose in 1846 when forty miners were killed; and occasions when they threatened as in 1835, when a loud and violent bang announced to the town of Redruth that the boiler of a nearby mine had exploded. The local paper reported:

"A most distressing scene was witnessed by those who proceeded to the spot, wives, children and parents overcome by terror and anxiety were hurrying in search of their relatives who were employed at the mine." (2)

Fortunately only three men died as a result of this explosion.*

In its social life the village came to be dominated by the chapels. This is not to say that Methodism monopolised the social life of the village. Of course it never approached that position, but because of the values which

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*Women sometimes went to the mine on more regular and less terrifying occasions. J.Y. Watson in 1843, reported that in the St. Just area sometimes as many as fifty women could be seen at one time on a Monday morning, around the engine house washing clothes in the warm water from the engine. (Compendium of British Mining p. 40).

it held and the behavioural forms on which it insisted from its adherents, it was not a culture which could easily co-exist with other cultures. As soon as its rapid growth took it beyond the situation of a minority sect, Methodism, often deliberately, came into conflict with those aspects of village life and behaviour which were offensive its own notions of propriety and the "good" life.

In this section several aspects of village life will be examined, beginning with recreational patterns and education, and including the old customary practices of wrecking and smuggling.

The Changing Pattern of Recreation

Behind the changing pattern of recreation in eighteenth and nineteenth century Cornwall, can be discerned pressures broadly divisible into two main categories. Firstly the effects of a capitalising mining industry on the amount of leisure time available. This has already been discussed in an earlier chapter. Secondly, those effects that we can, more with convenience than with precision, summarise as evangelical, employing the term in a broad sense to cover the moral reforming kind of pressures which lead to variously motivated condemnations of the traditional pastimes of the labouring poor on the grounds of their inherent brutality, immorality, debauchery, or general unspecified sinfulness.

Humane clergymen amongst others, had from the mid-eighteenth century, increasingly attacked the inhumanity of many of the amusements of the poor. They had equally been concerned to control the drunkenness which was often an associated feature. The Methodists combined this attitude with one which approximated to that of the new class of employers, although its motivation was distinct. Their puritanical distrust of enjoyment lead them to regard secular amusement as sinful; their equally rigid abhorence of idleness made them of similar mind to the employers in their condemnation of time-wasting.

In the middle years of the nineteenth century, many of the Methodist sanctions were re-inforced by the emergence of the temperance and tee-total movements, which confronted Satan's strongholds, not only by forthright condemnation, but also by counter-attraction. They offered alternative ways of using spare time. They marched the people behind banners and bands, quenched their thus acquired thirsts with gallons of weak tea, and catered for their needs for excitement and involvement by providing meetings dominated by passionate oral renderings of hard won struggles with temptation.

It has been shown above that the tinners previously enjoyed many holidays in the eighteenth century, and that these holidays were only gradually eroded in the course of the early nineteenth century. The holidays not associated with any particular custom, were occasions for gatherings at which, apart from sideshows, beer tents etc., music and dancing, the miners indulged in the traditional Cornish sports of wrestling and hurling. Accusations were being generally levelled by the mid-eighteenth century that these gatherings were too much characterised by heavy drinking, fighting and general rowdyism.

Games could be arranged on any of the holidays, but they were especially associated with the parish feasts. Borlase wrote in 1758:

> "Every parish has its annual feast, and at such time (however poor at other times of the year) everyone will make a shift to entertain his friends and relations on the Sunday, and on the Monday and Tuesday all business is suspended, and the young men assemble and hurl or wrestle, or both, in some part of their parish of the most public resort." (3)

Hurling was a traditional form of team ball game, which had been widespread in earlier times. Matches were generally promoted and patronised by the local gentry. The nature of the sport can be ascertained from the description provided by Carew in the early seventeenth century, and reprinted by Heath as still relevant in 1750:

> "About two or more Gentlemen commonly make the Hurling, by appointing the day for the exercise, which is usually on some holiday, when they bring together at a convenient place, two, three

> or more parishes of the East or South quarter, to hurl with as many of the West or North.
>
> Their goals are either the Gentlemen's houses who bring them together, or at places appointed in certain towns, three or four miles assunder, whereof either side choose their goal, the nearest to their respective habitations. When the sides meet, they neither compare numbers, nor pair men ... but a Silver ball is thrown up, and whoever of the two companies can catch it, and carry it by slight or force to the assigned goal of that company, wins the ball and the victory. But whoever seizes the ball generally finds himself so closely pursued by some of the adverse party, that they will not leave him until he is dispossessed of it, or laid flat upon the ground, disabled of longer detaining it. He therefore in time endeavours to throw the ball (with the hasard of intercepting) to some one of his company, the farthest before him, who catching the same makes off with it as before. And such as see which way it is carried give notice thereof to their companions, by crying, ware East, ware West etc." (4)

The game was every bit as rough as it sounds, the account continues:

> "When this sort of hurling is over, you shall see the Hurlers retire as from a pitched battle, with bloody noses, wounds and bruises and some with broken and disjointed limbs, which are all deemed fair play without ever consulting an Attorney, Coroner, or petty lawyer about the matter." (5)

Borlase says that the ball was customarily about three inches in diameter and made of wood encased with plated silver or gilt, and bore the motto in the Cornish language, "Guare wheag, yeu Guare teag" —— Fair play is good play. (6)

The gentry who promoted the match rewarded the victors, (7) and according to the seventeenth century account, if one of the goals had been a gentleman's house, he was presented with the ball as a trophy and as "an acknowledgement for drinking out all his beer." (8)

By the time that Borlase wrote in 1758, the game had altered little from the seventeenth century, except that hurling was by then much more confined to matches between teams from the same parish, than between rival parishes or groups of parishes as in the seventeenth century. This was because inter-parish rivalry had been found to lead to large scale bloody battles. (9)

Team selection was sometimes made on the basis of "Toms, Wills and Johns against the rest." (10)

Wrestling was probably a preferred and certainly a more frequently indulged pastime. It needed fewer participants, and occupied less time and space. In the eighteenth century it too, was promoted by the gentry, who offered prizes to be wrestled for. (11) But unofficial ad hoc contests were more frequent than promoted tournaments. Such contests frequently took place outside alehouses, and involved heavy side betting. Because of the nature of the sport it did not have to wait for holidays to be staged, although organised tournaments with worthwhile prizes were a part of the regular feast day scene.

Hurling was said to be nearly extinct in 1797, (12) and although the same thing was still being said of it in 1824, (13) it would appear that Cermoe feast in 1822 was the last one at which hurling was still part of the programme. (14) The decline of the sport might in part represent the reluctance of a more genteel generation of gentry to promote what Defoe described as a game fit only for barbarians.*(15) More likely it declined as it was primarily a holiday sport and the holidays which provided the occasions for its staging were being eroded.

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*Polwhele certainly thought that this was the reason:

> "The discontinuance in frequency of such sports, indeed among the common people, is chiefly to be attributed to a change in the habits and manners of their superiors. In Carew's time, gentlemen used to entertain a numerous peasantry at their mansions and castles in celebration of the two great festivals, or the parish feast or harvest home; when at the same time that our halls re-echoed to the voice of festal merriment, our lawns and downs and woodlands were enlivened by the shouts of wrestling and of hurling. Hospitality is now banished from among us: and so are its attendant sports."
>
> (R. Polwhele ed. Lavington's Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared (1833) pp. cxxi - cxxii)

It was not only Methodists who condemned the practices associated with feast days, the Anglican clergy also did so. The Rev. William Temple, Vicar of St. Gluvias, found occasion to preach a sermon in 1796, "respecting inhumanity to animals, induced by a bull baiting in the parish: a brutal amusement." (16) The Rev. William Borlase found it a great pity that "frolicking and drinking immoderately" at the parish feasts should make them exclaimed against by those who "distinguish not, as they ought, between the institution, and the disorderly observation of it." (17)

In 1750 a visitor to the western parts of the county found that parish feasts were celebrated with "great profaneness and debauchery." (18) Five years later another visitor wrote of the feast at St. Erme:

> "These feasts used to be attended with wrestlings, hurlings and other robust exercises, wch. often ended in murder and bloodshed, but by ye present Rector's endeavours and preaching agst. them have been happily laid aside." (19)

When one turns to the Methodists the tone of condemnation is entirely different. The sports themselves now possess an inherent quality of sinfulness. William Carvosso, a prominent class leader, wrote of his youth:

> "I was borne down by the prevailing sins of the age; such as cock-fighting, wrestling; card playing; and Sabbath breaking." (20)

A writer paying tribute to Wesley in 1814, listed wrestling and hurling, along with "excessive love of ardent spirits" as the three "most prominent vices" to which the Cornish had formerly been addicted. (21) The will of Hugh Kent, a tinner of Gwennap, left a house and three gardens to a relative, "providing he never wrestle any more after this date." (22) The broadsheet confession of James Eddy hanged at Bodmin in 1827, explained that the unfortunate man had got into bad habits, "smuggling, sabbath breaking, adultery, drinking, pilfering, gaming, wrestling etc., and thus got a bad name." (23)

From their first foothold in the county, the Wesleys had condemned wrestling. Charles Wesley noted on his second visit that at Gwennap in 1744:

> "At the last revel, they had not men enough to make a wrestling match, all the Gwennap men being struck off the devil's list, and found wrestling against him not for him." (24)

Claims for the success of the Methodists in transforming the behaviour of the miners began to be regularly put forward by the early years of the nineteenth century. A writer in 1802 remarking on the decline of wrestling ("every old inhabitant of this county can tell you how very much it has declined") conceded that there was much justice in the claim of the Methodists to have accomplished this change, thought that the magistrates had also contributed by "preventing such assemblages of riot and murder."* (25) The Rev. Richard Warner, himself an Anglican, was however, prepared in 1808 to give the larger share of the credit for the fact that "desperate wrestling matches ... and inhuman cockfights ... and riotous revellings" were by then of very rare occurrence to the Wesleyans. (26)

Wrestling did not totally disappear though denounced from the pulpit (27) a writer in 1864 found it still extensively practiced. (28) The decline of open patronage drove it into closer alliance with the innkeepers, who emerged as the main patrons of the sport.** (29) Despite Methodist opposition the inns

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*Polwhele states that gatherings for such purposes as wrestling had been discountenanced by the magistrates, "perhaps, on account of the increasing population of the country, and the danger from a spirit of insubordination that has of late years made an alarming progress." Polwhele was not however the man to give any credit to Methodism if it could be avoided. (loc. cit. preceding footnote p. cxxi)

**An advertisement in the West Briton claimed that if converted miners were asked they would reply that they could not attend such sports as wrestling without trampling on the commandment "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The advertisement was to persuade promoters from endangering the souls of the miners by organising wrestling matches. (West Briton 2nd Nov. 1821)
A letter in the same paper in 1829, protested against a local civic dignatory who had participated in the promotion of a wrestling match.

> "Why do you not go to the wrestling! For eight good reasons. Because I should get no good there. Because I can employ my time better. Because it is throwing my money away. Because I wish not to be seen in bad company. Because I would not encourage idleness, folly and vice. Because I should set a bad example. Because God has forbidden it. 'Abstain from all appearance of evil' — 1st Thess. v. 22 ... Because I must soon die." (West Briton 24th July 1829)

and beerhouses continued to play an important role in the social life of the village for many of the inhabitants. It was remarked in 1839, that no sooner did mining operations commence in any fresh district, then:

> "a beershop is almost immediately opened for the very purpose of inducing the honest but thoughtless miner to expend his money ... to draw these unsuspecting poor fellows into these haunts of vice, frequently at the back of the house is a kayle alley, and quoits; where they may also engage at pitch and toss, wrestling or other gamblings." (30)

The public house even played a role in the observance of funerals. In 1837 a public meeting was called in the mining village of Broage to petition Parliament for an act to ensure the better observance of the Sabbath. The Vicar spoke of the open sale of intoxicating drinks to attenders at Sunday funerals in the village:

> "in this populous district ... the friends usually go from the grave to the public house, and if a funeral is on a Sunday, it is made a kind of holiday walk for all the young people within several miles who hear of it. On their coming to the church town, the public houses are at once crammed to excess, and a shameful scene soon ensues." (31)

It has been mentioned above that pay days were often spent in the beerhouses in celebration which could last until the Monday, but there were other occasions for drinking associated with the work of the miners. When a boy took on a man's work, a treat was expected by the pare with which he was to work. It would cost the youngster several shillings, and with the others clubbing a trifle they would go to a beer shop. Similarly promotion to sumpman, pit-man, or captain was accompanied by treating. (32)

Two distinct and opposed recreational patterns can be discerned by the mid-nineteenth century. Two patterns which were more than distinct, they were mutually antagonistic.

In the early years of the Methodist movement, its adherents had represented a minority culture, distinguished by their behaviour and outlook from their neighbours. Their recreational activities centred around the chapel with its services, meetings, love feasts, watch nights, and hymn singing.

As the eighteenth century progressed and the membership of the societies grew, Methodism moved from being a minority culture into one which imparted generally observable characteristics and behaviour patterns to the population of the mining villages. With growing strength confrontation between the Methodists and their non-Methodist neighbours became more frequent. Before the turn of the century, the Methodists at Sithney had attempted to drown the noise of the revellers at the parish feast by singing psalms, and had been stoned by the revellers. (33) A party of Bible Christians tried in 1822 to stop the hurling at Germoe feast from taking place. (34)

By the mid-nineteenth century Methodism was strong enough to challenge in the towns as well as in its village strongholds, and the fair as well as the feast became an area of recreational confrontation. At Camborne Fair in 1840, the Wesleyan Minister held religious services on the fairground for the purpose "of counteracting the influence of the comedians", and appears to have produced no small degree of confusion. (35)

The Primitive Methodists of St. Austell held a camp meeting on the "Wrestling Downs", the site of the annual games, on the Sunday before the games. At this meeting they offered fervent prayer that God might stay "the prevalence of vice, and abolish the Sabbath desecrating custom." One of the umpires of the games became converted, and the Primitives were successful in that although the games were held, they were held "in a more retired place on the opposite side of the town, where they could carry on their sports without molestation." (36)

Often the Methodists took the line of counter-attraction rather than counter-action. The Rev. Thomas Collins took the children of the Camborne Sunday School on a seaside trip in 1849, "to give the poor children pleasure and at the same time to take them away from the perils of a noisy revelling fair." Collins even composed a special hymn for the occasion:

> "We rejoice, and we have reason,
> Though we don't attend the fair;

Better spend the happy season
Breathing in the fresh sea air.
Happy Children!
What a number will be there!" (37)

On the occasion of another fair, Collins held special evening services "to guard our young people." (38)

Apart from the specially contrived occasion, the annual tea-treat for Sunday School pupils had become a widespread institution by the 1820's. In July 1829, to describe a typical occasion, the pupils of the Falmouth Methodist Sunday Schools were so treated. After partaking of tea, "several of the children recited pieces suitable to the occasion. One boy astonished the auditory having actually committed the whole of the New Testament to memory." (39) A few years later the children of the Wesleyan Sunday School at Helston were taken by their teachers and friends of the school to the Looe Pool about a mile from the town, where tents were erected in which the children took tea. When they withdrew their teachers occupied their places and all appeared to greatly enjoy the festivity. (40)

On Midsummer Day 1847, a 'grand display' was made in Redruth by the town's Sunday scholars, who walked together in procession, "with flags, banners, arches etc." and afterwards took tea in their own chapels. (41)

The distance between the traditional and the Methodistical patterns of recreation had been widened by the decline of gentry and employer patronage. The promotion, not only of wrestling, but of cock-fighting, bull and badger baiting, and skittles was being undertaken by the public house. This association of amusements with the inns, became even more of a separating factor with the growth of the tee-total and temperance movements from the late eighteen-thirties on. The tee-totallers reinforced the old Methodist sanctions to the point of fanaticism. Their banner at a Penzance rally proclaimed simply, "Eight thousand Drunkards die annually and go to

Hell."* (42)

Attempts had been made before to deal with the drinking of the lower orders. A Society for the Suppression of Drunkenness had been formed at Redruth in 1805, which was to exert pressure on local law officers to enforce the laws against drunkenness, and it encouraged informers by paying rewards on successful conviction. (43) But this was an attempt of the upper ranks of society to enforce sobriety on their social inferiors through the stringency of a strictly enforced law. Tee-totalism enlisted the poor themselves in the campaign against the public house.

As a movement which aimed at mobilising the working classes in their own cause, tee-totalism, to an even greater extent than Methodism, offered counter-attractions to draw persons from the amusements which brought them into the sphere of the ale house.

In 1838 the tee-totallers held a grand field day at Redruth. Following a sermon preached in the market place, the members, preceded by a tee-total band, processed through the streets, with flags, banners, blue ribbons and medals. They returned to the market house where about 500 took tea, and at half past six they left again in procession behind the band for the Methodist chapel, where at a large meeting several new converts joined the society. (44)

The observance of the Ludgvan parish feast in 1839, represented a major departure from precedent. It was celebrated by the members of the total abstinence society who met at the church town and marched three miles through the parish. Compared with twelve months previously, the scene had changed a good deal:

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*The Methodists and tee-totallers were not completely identified groups. Indeed official Wesleyanism was hostile to tee-totalism. But Cornish Methodism became, nevertheless, closely associated with the movement. Six out of eight of the Wesleyan class leaders at St. Buryan in 1839 were tee-totallers, as were 18 class leaders at Gwennap, and at Germoe, the Wesleyan local preachers were said to have taken up the cause of total abstinence in "right good earnest". (from local reports in Cornwall Tee-Total Journal Feb. April, and May 1839).

> "the parish was one scene of revellry and drunkenness: and it seemed as if destruction had taken hold of the four corners of it. There were four public houses and twelve beer-shops: and in these ... no less than £6,000 was annually spent in intoxicating drinks. At present it is a rare thing to see a man drunk, unless he comes from another parish. Not a quarter part of the money is spent on drink; and those who formerly wasted their time and their earnings in the alehouse, are found decently clothed, with their families, in a place of religious worship." (45)

Tee-totalism provided the ceremony of bands and processions, and it gave the individual a sense of involvement through his own personal renunciation of the beer shop, and the opportunity to be a hero for at least the moment when he signed the pledge, or testified to a receptive audience to his salvation from the demon drink.

The counter-attraction to the amusements offered by the beer shop and the fair was an effective one. A Redruth diarist records that in June 1841:

> "The Rechabites walked in procession to Camborne, on their way (they) were met by the Camborne and neighbouring Rechabites and tee-totallers which all joined in the procession which was about a mile in length. It was a very grand sight indeed ... A Wrestling near the Brewery ... was very slightly attended." (46)

In 1843 a very grand tee-total and Rechabite festival was held in the town:

> "the procession was very long and splendid which perambulated the various streets of the town, an address was delivered at Plainanguarry in the open air* ... Tea was taken in the Association Chapel, after which there was an excellent Tee-total meeting in the same chapel which was crowded to excess, the whole of the proceedings of the day passed off well in connexion with Tee-totalism, but a man returning from the Pit (Gwennap), in a state of intoxication by the Steamer (mineral train), fell over and had his hand cut off by the Steamer going over him." (47)

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*Plain an guarry was an interesting choice of venue. In Cornish the name means Playing Place, or the open air arena where traditional sports and entertainments had been held.

A glance at the Whitsun weekend of 1844 is instructive on the manner in which the inhabitants of West Cornwall spent their time during a holiday period at the height of the total abstinence movement. Truro Whitsuntide fair was held, but was ill-attended in comparison with previous years. A newspaper report comments on the absence of the mine girls who "had been accustomed to pour into the town in large numbers from time immemorial", providing a rich spectacle in their "ill-assorted dresses, in every variety of gaudy colour." Camborne fair was also badly attended despite fine weather and as good a supply of amusements as usual.

Where then were the holiday crowds? The columns of the same newspaper supply the answer. At Redruth, the annual Tee-total and Rechobite Festival was held, and celebrated with "more than usual gaiety." Immense crowds of people continued parading the streets to a late hour in the evening. Two thousand people visited the town to witness the proceedings. At Helston a tee-total parade took place with banners and no less than three bands. (48)

A few years later in 1852, one of the earliest organised railway excursions in the county took place, conveying Redruth and Camborne Temperance societies to Hayle. Three locomotives pulled seventy-six mineral trucks filled with tee-totallers singing:

> "Steam is up and we are ready;
> See the engine puffing goes!
> Keep your heads cool, and be steady
> Mind your cups and mind your clothes.
>
> Happy Camborne, Happy Camborne,
> Where the railway is so near;
> And the engine shews how water
> Can accomplish more than beer."*

The return journey was not without incident:

> "The locomotive ran out of steam and the procession halted outside an orchard. In the words of one

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*Most of this song would appear to have geminely sung, and it was probably an adaption of the one composed by Collins for an earlier occasion (above p. 311). The last two lines are an added parody. (See Old Cornwall Vol. 2 Pt. 5 p. 42).

> chronicler: It may have been their extreme anxiety to take measures against such an intoxicating beverage as cider but at all events that army of tee-totallers swarmed down from the tracks and up the apple trees until the orchard resembled the famous cupboard of Mother Hubbard." (49)

On one occasion, however, there was the bitter taste of defeat for the tee-totallers. In 1844, Thomas Trevaskis, "The Temperance Father of the West", was defeated by the forces of revelry at Padstow. On 14th June Trevaskis spoke out against the oldest Cornish festival of all, the Padstow Hobby Horse. He described it as a scene of "riot, debauchery, and general licentiousness —— a perfect nuisance to all the respectable inhabitants of the place." He backed up his condemnation with the offer of a fat bullock to be roasted in the town in place of the ceremony every year for seven years. This offer was posted up in the town shortly before the day for the annual celebration of the following year drew near.

"To the Proprietors of the Hobby Horse of Padstow.

This is to give notice that on or about the end of the month. I shall offer you the Bullock, according to promise. It is for you to consult against that time, whether you will give up your vain practice of the Hobby for the more rational amusement of eating roast beef.

April 10 1845. Thomas Trevaskis

On the day Trevaskis himself drove the bullock into town. The people however persisted in being splendidly irrational. They drove him out of town, bullock and all, and emphasised their rejection of his offer with a hail of stones. (50)

Trevaskis was a Bryanite, and this was not the only occasion on which members of this sect clashed with celebraters of the Hobby Horse. In 1846 some Bryanites bound for Quebec as missionaries on a ship conveying Cornish emigrants, were much disturbed when on the 1st of May, some of the crew, who were Padstow men, produced a hobby horse made up from ship's canvas. The rider and his helpers galloped about the decks, and in the time honoured tradition of the ceremony, endeavoured to blacken the faces of such passengers who had not prudently retired below decks. One of the missionaries stood his

ground, but received a blackened face despite the poker which he brandished in defiance of such satanic revelry. (51)

In 1843 the tee-total societies of east Cornwall had arranged a meeting to take place on the slopes of Roughtor, a high spot on the Bodmin Moor. Despite damp, misty weather, three thousand persons attended. They attempted to repeat this success in 1844, and indeed this time ten thousand persons attended. This however, did not represent a large increase in the number of tee-totallers, far from it. The publicans of the neighbouring parishes, impressed with the attendance of the previous year, saw the festival as a heaven-sent opportunity for profit. They set up booths and stalls, and attracted many people by their promise of providing donkey racing and other amusements. Thus a day which was intended to see a great demonstration of strength by the tee-totallers earned for itself the unlikely name for a blue-ribband rally of the "Roughtor Revels". It was small compensation for the tee-totallers that one of the publicans was later fined £5 for selling outside the area of his license. (52)

Such setbacks, whilst they serve to emphasise the incompleteness of tee-total success in Cornwall, should not be allowed to detract too much from the very real successes which the movement had. A writer in 1864, after remarking that the parish feasts had become "but a sorry sight", consisting mainly of "drinking, sack races and donkey races" went on to remark that the feasts were no longer attracting the participation of the mass of the people, "since one of the great objects of attraction has been removed by the success of the temperance societies:

> "The majority derive far more amusement at assisting in the numerous tea drinks connected with the Sunday Dissenting Schools ... the drinks are also held on a variety of occasions, thus if a chapel has to be repaired, or a new one built, or a missionary meeting to be held, the same ceremony accompanies it."

The fare was plain, bread and butter, tea, and saffron cake, but the writer pointed out:

> "The parsimony of the corporeal banquet is amply atoned for by the prodigality of the intellectual one, for the speakers are many, and the orations lengthy."* (53)

Some amusement was brought to the poor by the travelling showmen and circuses. We find from the diary of a Redruth working-man, that in July 1842, there was a "very grand bustling day", when Van Hamburg, the lion tamer visited the town:

> "a grand and long procession of 40 horses and carriages, he drove eight horses in hand, several other shows one of which was a tall woman seven feet and a half high. The town was full of people till late in the evening. Supposed to be from 7,000 to 10,000 people in town." (54)

Twelve months later, A.W. Sandy's Riders from America were in town, and he drove ten horses in hand, (55) and in 1847 Mr. Hughes's Mammoth Equestrian Establishment, not only brought fifty horses, but camels and elephants as well. (56)

There were also those occasions, when some National event, a royal wedding, or birth, a victory, the signing of a peace treaty, provided an occasion when the ordinary people could hope to participate in celebrations. In 1814 the adventurers at Crinnis Mine, in celebration of the entrance of the Allied Army into Paris, entertained the captains, miners and work people in their employ. The captains dined together, and were allowed 12 dozen of wine, while the miners received a fine ox, one thousand loaves and ten hogsheads of beer. In the evening there was to be a grand firework display. (57) At Dolcoath tables were set for 1,500 under the windows of the counting-house, and on a signal given by a cannon, the captains marched in at the head of

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*C.f. Quarterly Review (1857)

> "Wrestling is almost discontinued, except as a publican's speculation. Hurling is kept up, though with less spirit than formerly. But the spirit of aggregation rather finds a vent in camp-meetings, temperance parties, and monster tea-drinkings." (p. 34)

companies of men, women, and children, preceded by a band of music, to be allotted, half a loaf, two pounds of beef and three pints of porter apiece.(58)

Occasions for celebration might occur, and travelling showmen might bring unexpected excitement, but the overall picture of scant cultural and recreational provision for the working classes, outside of the chapels and related associations remains. In retrospect many of the incidents of confrontation seem amusing, but it should not be forgotten that the recreational reformers were in deadly earnest. Nor should it be overlooked that if the individual is considered instead of the community, then open confrontation is replaced by mental conflict. The hard and painful balancing of enjoyment and damnation meant that it was a struggle not just for the leisure time of the miner, but in a very real sense, a struggle for total commitment to a changed pattern of life.*

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*An account of the revival of 1824 includes the following:

> "Among the vile and profane tinners that have been subdued in the above place is a noted wrestler ... (he) thanks God that among all the prizes which he has won he has now the best."
>
> (Methodist Archives Fletcher-Tooth Correspondence John Radford to Mrs. Tooth 30th Jan. 1824)

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Education

The Cornish member Davies Gilbert speaking in a Common's debate of 1807, claimed that there was a general diffusion of education in Cornwall; "at least so much of it that almost every person there had learned reading, writing and something of arithmetic." (1) This was a very unreal view of the situation. H.S. Tremenheere who reported on the state of education in the mining districts in 1841, found a large proportion of the adult male population unable to read; a still larger proportion unable to write, and very few females young or old, able to do either. (2)

It is hardly likely that Gilbert could have been right in view of the restricted opportunities with which a child labour situation confronts educational potentialities. A memoir of a miner published in 1811 states that he was completely uneducated as a child, and describes this as a common situation in the county in view of, "poor children being at a very early period employed to work at the mines." (3) Just how many of the children of the labouring poor in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were able to attend some form of educational establishment it is impossible to ascertain, but it is likely that even those who did manage to do so, attended village schools for only a very brief time before leaving for employment at the mines.

Labourers' children did in some instances receive a basic education. Samuel Drew and Dick Hampton, two men born into the eighteenth century mining class of whom biographies survive, both attended village schools for brief periods in their childhood. A third subject of a biography born at the same time and into the same social situation, received no schooling at all. (4) Drew was born in 1765 and attended day school before beginning work as a buddle-boy at the age of eight. He would not appear to have gained much from school and in fact was effectively taught to read and write by his mother at home. (5)

Richard Hampton, known as "Foolish Dick", a local preacher of somewhat extreme eccentricity, provided a description of the schooling which he received

in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Although it reveals how grateful he was to receive it, it hardly impresses on the reader any very exalted view of the quality of the village school:

> "When I was eight years old my paarents sent me to a raiding school, keept by a poor ewld man called Stephen Martin. My schoolin cost three a'pence a week. I was keept there for seven months, and so my edication was worth no less than three shillin and sixpence —— there's for 'ee! When my edication was finished, as they do say, I was took hum, seven months larning being all that my poor parents cud afford me. But I shall have to bless God to aull etarnaty for that edication." (6)

There was no shortage of village schools in some of the mining districts. Thomas Garland (b. 1804) records that there were no less than half a dozen within a two mile radius of his native village, but they were "in the extremest sense of the word, 'preparatory' schools." (7) In addition to the dame schools there were in some villages charity schools such as the one set up at Redruth in 1790 under the inspection of the Church Wardens to teach poor boys to read. This institution was hardly superior to the dame schools. The Church Wardens did not take their duty very seriously, and the school was left to an elderly pauper to teach the children as well as he could. In the face of this unsatisfactory situation, a separate school was set up, beginning by teaching ten girls twice a week, it soon attracted more poor children than it could handle. (8)

By the mid-nineteenth century, the availability of statistical evidence makes it possible to be more definite about the quantitive aspects of working class education. The Education Returns for 1833 reveal that there were 31,629 children under daily instruction in the county, and 34,361 attending Sunday Schools. Only six of the Sunday schools were in places where no other school existed, and these accounted for the instruction of only 207 pupils who can be supposed to have attended no other school. In what number and in what proportion duplicate entry was produced in the other districts the compilers of the returns were unable to estimate. (9) The day schools included

a computation of the dame schools. In the mining parish of Breage, for example, there were two National Schools containing 145 pupils and one charity school of 30 pupils, while about 200 pupils attended no less than eleven dame schools, where the boys learned reading, and the girls sewing and knitting. (10)

Tremenheere in his report on education in the mining districts, published in 1841, took a sample of seven mining parishes, Tywardreath, St. Blazey, Gwennap, Redruth, Illogan, St. Agnes, and St. Just. This is a fair sample in that it covers the different mining districts of the county. Estimating the total population of the sample to be about 51,000, he thought that about twenty-five per cent would fall in the age cohort 5-15 i.e. about 13,000. From this he deducted an allowance for the children of higher and middle class parents and for working class children prevented from attending school through illness or similar cause. These he estimated to be about a third i.e. 4,333. Out of a further 900 children attending dame schools, those judged able to read, sew, and knit amounted to 250. 1,614 children regularly attended day-schools. Deducting all these from the 13,000 he estimated to be the size of the school-age cohort, he concluded that 6,803 working class children, or just over 50% of the total age cohort, were not receiving daily instruction.*(11)

This does not mean that this percentage never received secular education. Children commenced employment at the mines at various ages from eight to fifteen, and so there was always at least the theoretical possibility of a short period of secular education before work at the mine commenced. Tremenheere was aware of this, but made no attempt to estimate the number of child

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*C.f. William Francis's poem Gwennap (1845)

> "Tis said, perhaps wisely, that all those between
> Four or five years of age and that of fourteen
> Should be constantly kept to their duty at school
> And if this be allowed as a general rule
> To Gwennap applying, then must we confess,
> The number of pupils, indeed is much less
> Than the case doth demand, for there are no more
> Than eight hundred in all, or eight in a score
> Where two thousand should be." (p. 130)

employees at the mines who had previously attended day schools. An approximation can be obtained from the evidence collected in 1842, although the possible sample is much too small for the results to be claimed in any way as conclusive. Out of thirty-three witnesses who gave information on their educational background, nineteen, well over 50%, had attended day schools, ten had or were still attending Sunday schools only, and of the nineteen who had attended day schools fifteen had attended or were still attending Sunday schools. It would appear that the number of children who were educated solely at Sunday schools was small compared with those who had received at least a small degree of secular instruction. It was also clear that the Sunday school was functioning as an additional source of instruction for many children. (12) There is also evidence that the poorer miners did not always send their children even to Sunday school, frequently excusing this on the grounds of being unable to afford clothing decent enough to send them in. (13)

In qualative terms the educational provision of the mid-nineteenth century also left much to be desired. Tremenheere found teaching methods unsatisfactory in 27 out of 32 day schools which he inspected. The teachers were so ill-paid that they could not afford good class books, and of their background he reported that the great majority were former miners who had been sick or injured or else failed tradesmen. (14) This agrees with the evidence of John Harris's autobiography, who describes his village teacher of the eighteen twenties, who was a crippled miner*:

> "In those days any shattered being wrecked in the mill or the mine, if he could read John Bunyan, count fifty backwards, and scribble the squire's name was considered good enough for a pedagogue; and when he could do nothing else was established behind a low desk in a school." (15)

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*See also the entry in the Breage Vestry Minute Book 1796 - 1816 (C.R.O. D.D.P. 18/8/1) for 18th March 1807, where an agreement is entered to pay a St. Erth Miner £12 p.a. "to take the school at Breage Church Town, and to learn (sic) ten or twelve Scholars gratis to their parents at the parishes discretion."

In the greater number of schools visited by Tremenheere, few boys had advanced in arithmetic as far as the rule of three, still fewer had learned anything of grammar, English history, geography, mensuration, or linear drawing. In almost all the schools the amount of instruction thought requisite for the girls, "scarcely passed the boundary of the merest elements."(16)

It has already been pointed out that the direct quantitive contribution of the Sunday school was slight in comparison to that of the day school. How did they compare qualitively? Tremenheere did not compute the Sunday school attendance nor inform on the proportion in which it was divided between the established church and the various non-conformist denominations. In 1858, however, 12,652 pupils attended Church of England Sunday schools as against 32,047 who attended Wesleyan, 3,604 who attended Primitive Methodist, 5,208 United Methodist Free Churches, and 312 Methodist New Connexion. These are overall county figures, the preponderance of the Methodist Sunday school can be expected to have been even more marked in the mining districts. (17)

The provision of secular education was not the raison d'etre of the Sunday school, and the nature of the instruction which it provided in the basic educational direction of literacy was minimal. Witnesses in 1842 were under no illusions as to the educational efficiency of these schools. When asked if he considered them adequate, a witness from the western mining district replied:

> "by no means. They are doubtless of some avail for the purpose of instruction, but their moral effect is the only one worthy of attention."

A witness from the central district held similar views. He thought them sufficient to keep up religious knowledge, but no other kind, and not even sufficient to keep up moral training. Barham reported that the teaching in many of them went little beyond enabling the scholars to read the Bible. He found only one instance of writing being taught at a Sunday school. This was at St. Day, and was of very recent introduction. (18) It is true that they provided a measure of secularly useful information, the Bible uses the same

alphabet as other literature, but this was the only direction in which instruction other than moral or theological was given. None of the ten children from the 1842 sample used above (p. 324) who had attended only Sunday school appears to have been able to write, and several read very badly.

Time was consumed in learning by heart endless verses from the psalms. This disturbed a correspondent in the Cornish Banner in 1846, not so much because of the time which it consumed might have been spent in more profitable directions, but because it tended to the debasement of religion:

> "I consider these noble institutions as beneficial to the mental and moral condition of man; but I fear they are not productive of that good which they might achieve if properly managed ... I would just call attention to the prevailing custom of reciting pieces on anniversary occasions ... I cannot but conclude that it is an evil. It entirely supersedes almost every other instruction for several weeks preparatory to the exhibition, for in most cases it deserves no better name. A bad taste is induced in the hearers; indifference is manifested to the word preached; and many other evils are engendered which are highly prejudicial to the interests of this good cause. Many of these displays are nothing better than Sabbath desecration." (19)

Even if this writer doubted that such feats of memory brought much in the way of spiritual enlightenment, they did in some cases bring material reward:

> "The children are taught reading, the Conference Catechism, spelling and the recitation of verses from the Gospels or the Psalms. For this last a reward is given at the rate of 5d per hundred verses. The retentive memory evinced by some of the children is surprising. A boy aged twelve on one occasion recited 363 verses, and on another 400." (20)

The Methodists did not see the Sunday school as making good deficiencies in secular education. At a meeting of Wesleyan Methodists at Truro in 1844, the prominent laymen and subsequent historian of the movement, George Smith, spoke of education provision for the poorer classes as a new problem for Methodists to consider. The people had been saved in spite of their ignorance,

and it was now to be considered whether the children of these classes were to have the means of acquiring that education which their circumstances required. (21)

None the less the Sunday schools did to some extent alleviate the problem of enabling the child to continue to exercise his rudimentary skills once his brief period of elementary instruction had ended. Barham found that many of the mine children read so badly that they could gain little interest or pleasure from it, and that if they discontinued attending Sunday school, it was probable that what little they had learned was lost. This was the normal case with children whose education had not been continued until their minds were expanded sufficiently to give them an interest in what they had been taught. (22)

The main concern of the Sunday school was with the spiritual and moral state of the children; to instil in them the required virtues of order, obedience, and industry, and incidentally by requiring their attendance to prevent them from profaning the Sabbath. As a writer pointed out when a new Sunday school was opened at Camborne in 1846, maybe hundreds of boys and girls would be gathered together, "preserved from the desecration of the Sabbath, and many other sins, and taught to read and understand the word of God." (23) The Rev. Samuel Dunn, Methodist minister at Camborne, giving evidence in 1842, seemed to think that they were the only means by which the young miners could be civilised:

> "If it were not for the moral influence of the Sunday schools, it would be scarcely possible to live among them, looking to the characters of those young men." (24)

It was not only through the Sunday school that the Methodist influence on Cornish education was felt. Many of the teachers in the village schools were staunch adherents. John Harris clearly thought that the academic shortcomings of his village instructor were more than compensated for in other directions:

> "But though John Roberts was a stranger to most of the sciences now taught in schools, he possessed what perhaps is better still — a thorough knowledge of the saving powers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His daily instruction began and ended with extemporare prayer." (25)

C.T. Trevail who attended the day school attached to the Ebenezer chapel in his village about 1860, also received an education with a strong evangelical bias:

> "... one very important lesson I received at Miss Cock's was given by Mrs. Cock, the mother who would often speak to the children on the importance of being truthful, honest and obedient to parents, and to remember that God's eye was always on us and saw all that we did. Amongst other things she showed us a picture of what was said to be the devil — a dreadful looking person with a pitch fork. We were told that he would deal with all wicked children and put them in the fire with this fork." (26)

The role of Methodism is encouraging the self-improvement of working men has been discussed above (pp.). Towards the end of the eighteen-thirties more institutionalised forms of adult education began to develop. Miners and Mechanics eading Societies and Institutes were opened in several of the villages. The Camarrack Miners and Mechanics Reading Society was opened in 1838 by the Rev. Thomas Philpots who stated its objects to be, "the improvement of intellect", the "enlargement of mental powers", the "expansion of the reasoning faculties", and the "avoidance of idleness and vice". Its newly completed building comprised a reading room and a school of instruction.(27) A year later its progress was reported to have been impressive. The library had improved, and lectures had been given on the arts and sciences, natural and experimental philosophy, metallurgy, astronomy and architecture. At the St. Agnes Institute things were also looking up, despite the fact that it alone of the village institutes had not received any gifts of books from the neighbouring gentry. (28)

As early as 1834 an Institution for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge had been established at Camborne with a library of a hundred volumes by a group

of young working men (29). At St. Just in 1841 there were two book societies run by the miners themselves, one of which had been in existence for twenty years and had fifty members, who paid its entrance fee and twopence per week. (30)

The growing interest in education from the eighteen-thirties reflected both the growing interest of the working men themselves, and a change of attitude towards popular education on the part of the upper and middle classes. Davies Gilbert, the Cornish M.P. spoke for his class and age in 1807, when opposing Whitbread's Parochial School Bill, he maintained:

> "However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would in effect be prejudicial to their morals and happiness: it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants to agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them: instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties: it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity. It would render them insolent and indolent to their superiors, and in a few years the result would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them." (31)

By the thirties this belief was giving way to the idea that rather than being necessarily subversive of the social order, the extension of education might serve to reinforce the bonds of society. At the opening of a miners' reading society in 1838, the local Vicar had expressed the view:

> "We need not fear one class overtaking and trampling on another — we need not dread the over-education of the people — the better they are educated, the better men, the better citizens they will become." (32)

Tremenheere's report on the State of Education in the Mining Districts of Cornwall published in 1841, represents perhaps the most detailed and significant example of this trend of thought:

> "By the guidance of stricter principles, by the resources of purer and more elevated tastes, how many of their present temptations to vice and improvidence would be combated, how much occasional

> distress and permanent suffering avoided, how much useful direction received —— that especially which makes it one of the leading objects of moral and intellectual improvement, not to raise the individual from his own sphere, but to enable him to do his duty in that to which he belongs." (33)

More eloquent perhaps was the speech of Thomas Carland when he opened the Camborne Literary Institution in 1842. After describing Chartism and Socialism as weeds sprung from an uncultivated soil, this local journalist and Methodist layman went on to point out the social advantages of literature:

> "Suppose that in this parish every individual was to read and understand the Vicar of Wakefield, what would be the result? You might abolish your petty sessions. Dr. Primrose and Mr. Burchell would keep the whole parish in order. The man who could enjoy that tale could not be a disturber of the public peace, simply because elegance of moral taste, and low brutal habits do not naturally coalesce in the same individual." (34)

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(34) T. Garland, opp. cit. 398-9

Smuggling and Wrecking

The sanction of custom is often resiliant enough to permit forms of behaviour which conflict with existing law and/or the moral teaching of a powerful cultural influence, such as Methodism. In general the miners were noted as a turbulent, excitable, but not particularly lawless people. However in certain specific areas, which were without doubt defined by law as areas of criminal activity, they had their own notions as to what constituted permitted behaviour. It was said of them in 1841:

> "For the law they entertain respect in all cases, except those few in which the uprightness of their judgement is unhappily perverted by ancient and ignorant prejudice." (1)

Food rioting was one such activity, where customary notions of justice prevailed over the law's conception of property rights and public order.* But when the writer spoke of judgement being perverted by ancient prejudice, he was most likely thinking of the two frequently indulged activities of smuggling and wrecking. It was these coastal activities which provide the most striking examples of community sanction permitting activities which were at the same time illegal and expressly condemned by John Wesley. Neither smuggling nor wrecking was regarded as illegal or immoral by many of the inhabitants of the mining districts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. If they were illegal, it was only because misguided legislators had declared them to be so.

It is not to be supposed that a county with so long a sea coast as Cornwall was not implicated in the widespread smuggling which existed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. The historian Walter Borlase wrote in 1758:

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*Poaching was also a related activity. In 1837 a local paper reported that it had long been a custom for the young miners on finishing their day's work to poach in the local game reserves, in such formidible numbers as to deter the gamekeepers from interfering. (Cornwall Gazette 16 June 1837).

> "The common people on the seacoast, are, it must be owned, too much addicted to carry off our bullion to France, and bring us back nothing but brandy, tea and some other luxuries of life." (2)

There is no explicit identification of smuggling with the mining communities. Smuggling is an organised activity directed by professionals, not the ad hoc activity of an off-core miner. Not surprisingly it is the fishing communities which offer the closest occupational group identity with the smuggling trade, and some of the main centres, Looe, Polperro, and Cawsand, were not settlements with any close connexion with the mining industry. But there is no doubt that the miners were implicated in the smuggling trade. In some of the western districts, the mining and fishing communities were so closely integrated as to constitute almost a mixed occupational group. This was so at St. Ives, where Pryce complained in 1778 that it was difficult to secure labour for the mines in the fishing season. (3) St. Ives was a noted centre of smuggling activities.*

Samuel Drew, who engaged in smuggling activities while residing at Cawsand, was the son of a miner and a former child employee at the mines, as was Captain Harry Carter, one of the best known of Cornish smugglers. (4) Large gangs of miners, it would appear from a letter from the Fowey Customs Officer in 1766, did engage in smuggling activities at some distance from the mining districts:

> "... of late the Smugglers go in such large gangs that we are in danger of our lives by happening to meet with them; for whether we attack them or not, they seldom fail to attack us when their number and strength is so much superior ... These men are all tinners, and don't live within twenty-miles of this neighbourhood, are seldom seen above ground in the day-time and are under no apprehension of being known by us." (5)

Apart from such direct involvement, the miners were certainly involved

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*In the 1780's the value of customs seizures at St. Ives was £11,000 — nearly treble the gross revenue product of the port. (H. Alton & N.H. Holland, The King's Customs (1908) p. 357).

in the distribution network required by smuggling. The disposal of landed contraband required two essentials; means of transport from the shore, and a hiding place in which cargoes could be stored until sold. The mining industry was well placed to supply both these needs. The large number of pack animals employed in carrying supplies to and from the mines were available, and the underground passages of the mines afforded excellent places of concealment; the more suitable because of their frequent proximity to the coast. A gentleman from St. Columb reported in 1765 that his servants had seen 60 pack horses on route to Padstow, each carrying a hundredweight and a half of tea. (6) The Fowey Customs Officer in 1766 reported gangs of 36 and 28 strong each man with a horseload of tea or brandy.

The excellent possibilities of concealment afforded by the mines were especially useful in view of the large amounts of contraband which needed storing. Early March was said to be the "time of harvest", when the gangs would be almost constantly employed in carrying goods into the mines to keep as a stock for the summer when the shorter nights increased the risk of being intercepted by the revenue smacks. (7)

In 1825 the labour force of Wheal Rowell Mine near Fowey was discharged when almost to a man it became intoxicated on brandy from casks concealed in the mine. (8) In addition to the underground miners, the tin streamers of the moors made a profitable sideline of concealing barrels among their isolated moor workings, among which it was said no Riding Officer dare appear. (9)

Apart from active participation, whether as runners, transporters or concealers, the people of the mining villages were deeply implicated in the trade as consumers. Borlase complained in 1758 that even the poorest families in the mining parishes consumed snuff, tea, tobacco, and, when they could, brandy. (10) Twelve years later he was complaining that even the families in the almshouses had their tea and brandy. (11) Polwhele remarked in 1806 on the addiction of the Cornish labourer to spirits, (12) and in

many ways brandy was the county's equivalent to London's gin. A recent book on an Cornish inns points out that in 1749 a cargo of confiscated brandy offered for sale at 5s. 6d. a gallon received no bids since smugglers were currently supplying it at 3s. 3d. a gallon, the writer justly remarks that it is difficult to appreciate the ease with which smuggled liquor could be obtained and the cheap rate at which it could profitably be retailed. (13) Smuggled luxuries for the well-to-do may have been a profitable sideline for the smugglers, but the mass market for tea, brandy and tobacco was the economic mainstay of the trade.

What effect did the widespread dissemination of Methodism have on the smuggling proclivities of the Cornish? Wesley described smuggling as "that wickedness for which Cornwall stinks in the nostrils of all who fear God or love King George." (14) At the Methodist Conference of 1744 he had instructed his followers:

> "Extirpate smuggling, buying or selling uncustomed goods out of every Society; particularly in Cornwall, and in all seaport towns. Let no person remain with us who will not totally abstain from every kind and degree of it." (15)

Despite this unequivocable stand he found on a visit to St. Ives nine years later that almost all of the society bought or sold uncustomed goods, he warned them that if they continued to do so, they would see his face no more. (16) In 1762 he was optimistic enough to record in his journal that smuggling could no more be found in the Cornish societies, "and since that accursed thing has been put away, the work of God has everywhere increased."(17) Yet in 1773 he was still having to instruct his Superintendant in west Cornwall to "put an end to smuggling at all hazards." (18)

Some Wesleyans undoubtedly did renounce smuggling. When Richard Trewavas was converted in 1770, he gave up, "all sinful ways, —— smuggling in particular." (19) Yet the impression is unmistakable that many Wesleyans were able to reconcile smuggling with Methodism despite Wesley's express condemnation of it. A Methodist minister on his way to preach in 1802,

stopped to watch a cargo being landed and significantly records, "in consequence of this we had very few hearers." (20) James Dunn of Mevagissey gave up smuggling about 1805, when he recognised the profitability of his legitimate business, but for many years previously he had made a small fortune in brandy smuggling while being an active Methodist and counting himself the friend of John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and Adam Clarke. (21) A visitor to the county in 1807 met a Methodist preacher who "talked, as all the people here do, about some of his relations being in the smuggling line, as coolly as if he had mentioned any regular occupation." (22)

The best known of the reconcilers of Wesleyanism and smuggling was Captain Harry Carter of Prussia Cove. Carter, the son of a miner, was born in 1749 and worked at the mines until he was sixteen when he left to go fishing and smuggling. He first came under Methodist influence as a child of eight or nine, becoming seriously convinced of sin. Although he was not converted until 1789, he never completely lost his Methodist convictions in the intervening period, permitting no swearing among the crews of the smuggling vessels which he commanded. (23) After his conversion he for a time concentrated on local preaching instead of smuggling, but when his past caught up with him and made it advisable for him to leave England, he went to Roscoff in Brittany to act as agent for his brothers who, "were meaning to car (sic) on a little trade in Roscoff, in the brandy and gin way." (24) While in Brittany he conducted services on the quayside for the crews of smuggling vessels. At no point in his autobiography is there the slightest hint that he saw anything untoward in being both a smuggler and a Methodist.

The decline of smuggling owed more to government action than to Methodist exhortation. Signs that the great days were over were already clear, when after the ending of the French Wars a new more efficient preventive force was established along the English coast. Smaller faster boats of necessity replaces the large heavily armed smuggling craft. The decline

was gradual, but by the eighteen-forties the greatest days were over.

Unlike smuggling, wrecking was not an organised, but an ad hoc activity. The assemblage of crowds to plunder ship wrecked vessels was largely spontaneous. It was not an activity which demanded a high degree of organisation, and shipwrecks were, despite accusations to the contrary, an act of fate of which the villagers had little advance warning.

The author of a tract published in 1820 described wreckers as the hard-hearted inhabitants of the coastal regions who:

> "consider the stranded vessel as their property as soon as the waves have thrown it on their coast! Under this unhallowed impression they plunder all they can, although the owner should survive and protest against their proceedings, and implore them to refrain from thus ruining himself and his family." (25)

This practice of coastal plunder was widespread around the British coastline until the mid-nineteenth century. A glance at the Statute Book confirms that it was a matter of concern to the government from at least the time of Edward I. It was in the eighteenth century that increasing attention began to be paid to the depradations of coastal dwellers on stranded vessels. An Act of 1713, (26) which was commanded to be read "in all the Parish Churches and chapels of every seaport town and upon the sea coast in this kingdom", finding that, "many ships of trade after all their dangers at sea escaped, have unfortunately near home, run on shore ... and that such ships have been barbarously plundered by Her Majesty's subjects", reinforced existing legislation by increasing the penalties for wrecking. Yet, in 1735 London merchants were still petitioning Parliament complaining of the "barbarous custom of plundering of ships wrecked or driven on shore", and of the ill treatment which their crews received. (27) Comprehensive legislation was passed in 1753 which made it a capital offence to "plunder, steal or take away cargo, tackle or part of a wrecked vessel, to beat, wound or hinder the escape of any person trying to save his life, or to put out, "any false light or lights with intention to bring any ship or vessel into danger."

This act also prescribed six months imprisonment for receiving and concealing shipwrecked goods and seven years transportation for assaulting an officer or justice who was attempting to protect a wreck. (28)

In 1776 following petitions from Poole and Bristol, Burke introduced yet another bill which proposed putting teeth into the existing legislation by levying a fine on the hundred in which any wreck was plundered. This bill was lost, since the opinion of the House was that the problem was not one of fresh legislation, but of the better enforcement of existing legislation. (29)

Wrecking was on the decrease by the mid-nineteenth century but was still prevalent enough to receive special attention in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854, a clause in this act empowering the Receiver of the Board of Trade to summon all persons to his aid in rescuing and preserving stranded property, and granting indemnity if any wrecker should be shot. (30) A writer commenting on this act in 1876, described it as "not too stringent to suppress the lawlessness even now prevailing when wrecks take place on remote parts of coasts." (31)

The term "wrecking" has no precise legal meaning but covers a number of illegal activities ranging from the casual pocketing of articles thrown up by the sea, to the deliberate luring of vessels onto rocks; from petty larceny to open defiance of the law; from near beachcombing to coastal plunder. Wrecking in the general sense of the illegal appropriation of cargo or materials from wrecked vessels was prevalent at many places around the British coastline,* but the Cornish coast was especially notorious in this respect; indeed to many writers "Cornish" was an adjective which necessarily preceded any use of the word "wrecking". Pope, in 1732, used the couplet:

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*The widespread nature of wrecking in Britain in the early 19th Century can be best seen in the evidence presented by the Constabulary Commissioners in 1839 (Parl. Papers 1839 xix). This, the most comprehensive survey of wrecking, was based on printed questionnaires returned by the coastguard. These returns are preserved in the Public Record Office. (H.O. 73/3).

> "Then full against his Cornish lands they (the winds) rear,
> And two rich shipwrecks bless the lucky shore."

The poet explains in a footnote that he placed the scene in Cornwall:

> "... not only from their frequency on that coast, but from the inhumanity of the inhabitants to those to whom that misfortune arrives. When a ship happens to be stranded there, they have been known to bore holes in it, to prevent its getting off; to plunder and sometimes even to massacre the people." (32)

A visitor to the county in 1750 found the people, especially the tinners, civil and hospitable, but thought that it was difficult to defend them in:

> "... falling in so violent a manner not only on wrecks but on ships which are drove in with all the people, and might be saved, but the common people come and plunder, even to breaking up the vessels." (33)

Such a view was not without justification. Some Cornishmen, however, were indignant enough to point out that there was nothing uniquely Cornish about the plundering of ship wrecked vessels. A local magistrate wrote in 1792:

> "Cornwall hath long been infamous to a proverb, for the inhospitality of the inhabitants on occasions of shipwrecks; ... Instances of shipwrecks in other parts of England and in Wales, have happened when the inhabitants of the coasts have behaved altogether as bad, if not worse, than Cornishmen." (34)

In 1819 the West Briton complained of the impression given by the Western Luminary when it referred to wreckers at Deal under the heading, "Wreckers out of Cornwall." (35)

The Cornish, though not deserving a reputation as monopolists of this particular economic activity, could hardly deny the frequency with which such depredations occurred on their coast. To coastal dwellers, the materials obtained from wrecked vessels made a useful contribution to the local economy, supplying commodities much in want in poor households, or even a surplus for sale.

"The Good Samaritan came ashore,
To feed the hungry and cloathe the poor,
Barrels of beef and bales of linnen,
No poor man shall want a shillin'." (36)

runs a verse about a vessel which came ashore on the Cornish coast in 1846. It was not just the cargoes which were useful; the ropes which formed the rigging, the timbers from which the ship was constructed, and the copper which sheathed her hull, were all useful commodities to the villagers.* The Helston lawyer Christopher Wallis noted in his diary in 1796, that staves from a wrecked vessel were being openly sold in the streets of that town by persons calling themselves salvers. (37) When Sir John Killigrew erected the first lighthouse at the Lizard in 1619, he claimed that most of the houses in the district had been constructed from wrecked materials. (38)

Certain cargoes appear to have been at least partly consumed on the shore itself. The Rev. C.G. Smith, familiar with the Mounts Bay district wrote in 1818, that it was not uncommon when a vessel containing wine or spirits came ashore, for persons to drink so much as to perish on the shore in the winter cold. (39) (This is supported by a local press report which indicates that Smith had a specific case in mind).** (40)

Thus far wrecking has been considered from a comprehensive standpoint. More specific aspects of the activity require examination. Above, wrecking

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*See for example some of the objects for the taking of which wreckers were convicted in the courts: 1812, a quantity of rope, (Sherbourne Mercury 6th April 1812); 1830, 2 bars of iron, (Cornwall Gazette 11th Dec. 1830); 1829, some copper, (ibid. 10th Jan. 1829); 1837, a quantity of staves, (West Briton 21st Oct. 1837); 1767, death sentence passed on an octogenarian for taking a small quantity of rope, (Cal. H.O.P. George III No. 551).

**The availability of plunder depended of course, on the frequency of wrecks. Rev. C.S. Smith writing of the Mounts Bay coast in 1818 writes: "No winter passes without four or more valuable vessels being thus shipwrecked on this coast." (The Wreckers or a Tour of Benevolence from St. Michael's Mount to the Lizard Point (1818) p. 4). This was the south coast, if anything the north coast was more dangerous; between 1823 and 1846, 131 vessels were lost on a 40 mile stretch from Land's End to Trevose Head. (quoted by A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, Cornish Seafarers (1932) p. 105).

has been described as a species of plunder often involving open defiance of the forces of law. In this context wrecking can be viewed as a form of crowd activity, in which by weight of numbers and with a sufficient determination, wreckers could secure their plunder despite attempts to prevent them. The Penzance Customs officer complained in 1720 that the smugglers and wreckers in that neighbourhood had become so insolent that when the officers succeeded in securing a cargo it was taken from them by force. (41) In 1838 a case is recorded in which the wreckers armed themselves with wood and staves and threatened to destroy the Coastguard if they were resisted.*(42)

Frequently in its haste for plunder the crowd behaved with undoubted inhumanity towards the victims of shipwreck. Not only were the bodies of drowned men stripped of anything of value, but survivors too, were likely to have their clothes and any pieces of property which they had saved taken from them. A Cornish magistrate wrote in 1753 of, "the monstrous barbarity practiced by these savages upon the poor sufferers", and claimed to have seen many a survivor, "half dead, cast ashore and crawling out of the reach of the waves, fallen upon and in a manner stripped naked by those villians, and if afterwards he saved his chest or anymore cloaths they have been taken from him." (43) The crew of the French vessel Marianne cast ashore at Perranzabuloe in 1764 were stripped of their clothes by the inhabitants. (44)

Evidence suggests that the wreckers believed themselves to have a legitimate claim to appropriate the materials and cargoes of wrecked vessels. Hitchens and Drew in their history of the county, published in 1824, state that the Cornish inherited from their ancestors:

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*At a wreck in the mining parish of Illogan in 1831 the coastguard were obliged to resort to arms to protect the cargo (Cornwall Gazette 1st Jan. 1831), a month previously at Port Holland, plundering only ceased when a revenue cutter fired over the crowd. (ibid. 11th Dec. 1830).
Often cargoes and wreck materials would be so strewn along the coast that adequate protection from plunder was impossible. This point is made in the coastguard returns in 1839 by the coastguards of both Fowey and Padstow. (H.O. 73/3.

> "... an opinion that they have a right to such spoils as the ocean may place within their reach, many among the more enlightened inhabitants secure whatever they can seize, without any remorse; and conclude without any hesitation, that nothing but injustice, supported by power and sanctioned by law, can wrench it from their hands." (45)

Cyrus Redding claimed in 1842 that in this belief the poor were only following the example of some of those in more exalted social positions:

> "The vulgar had a notion formerly that the property saved from shipwreck belonged to anyone who was on board that survived, and if no one survived, to anyone who might pick it up from the beach. They were taught by a claim of some lord of the manor in former time, one no more just than their own; that the ship and cargo were not the property of the owners; and they thought that what they secured with labour, floating upon the sea, or strewed upon the rocks, sometimes on their own land, they might appropriate as justly as a claimant under feudal usage." (46)

When Thomas Ellis was sentenced at a Quarter Sessions in 1837 following the plunder of a French vessel at St. Just, the chairman regretted seeing "so respectable a youngman" with "so good a character", facing such a charge. He was sorry that in that neighbourhood, wrecking, "has not been sufficiently regarded as an offence of the blackest dye." (47)

The issue is a somewhat complicated one. There were persons who possessed the right of wreck on their lands, and there were possible legitimate claims for salvage. Neither case could however offer a legal justification for the immediate plundering of wrecked vessels with which we are concerned. The right to wreck possessed by some manor holders* was applicable only to unclaimed wreck, i.e. cargoes or materials the rightful owners of whom could not be identified, and from the early statutes of the reign of

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*For example one of the landowners for whom William Jenkin acted had the right to unclaimed wreck materials on his manor, and appears to have claimed one third of the value of goods taken up at sea as his right. (A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, News from Cornwall (1951) 152-3).

Edward I (3 Ed. Ic. 4) through to the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854, even this type of wreckage was to be kept for a year and a day to give merchants etc. a chance to prove their ownership of it.

Salvage was allowed at reasonable rates for goods which were saved from destruction by the sea, but once again this can hardly be interpreted as allowing the immediate and total seizure of the cargoes and materials of stranded vessels.

Wreckers were certainly adept at securing the plunder which they sought. The miners of the eighteenth century were said to be able to cut a large trading vessel to pieces in one tide. (48) In 1818 it was said:

> "When the news of a wreck flies round the coast, thousands of people are instantly collected near the fatal spot; pickaxes, hatchets, crowbars and ropes are their usual implements for breaking up and carrying off whatever they can. The moment the vessel touches the shore she is considered fair plunder, and men, women and children are working on her night and day. The precipices they descend, the rocks they climb, and the billows they buffet, to seize the floating fragments are the most frightful and alarming I ever beheld." (49)

It appears that even if a sound vessel came ashore, unless she were immediately protected by a sufficient force she would, on certain shores, be as quickly rendered unseaworthy by the inhospitable inhabitants as she would have been by the storm which she had escaped. An unidentified ship of 250 tons which came ashore at Mawgan in 1754 remained in good condition, but only until "a parcel of Cornish Barbarians from St. Agnes, Lower St. Columb etc. came to the place and demanded the whole as wreck." (50) No time was wasted. As soon as the tinners observed a distressed ship off-shore they were said to "arm themselves with sharp axes, and hatchetts (sic) and leave their tynn (sic) works to follow those ships." (51)

The comprehensive act of 1753 referred to the practice of putting out false lights to lure vessels ashore, and this practice is part of the folklore of wrecking, which, just like that other widespread wrecking legend the biting off of fingers or ears to secure rings or earrings, is to be found in almost

every wrecking district. The evidence on this point is rarely specific: in fact it is extremely vague. Tales of the Cornish using hobbled donkeys with lanterns attached to them to imitate the up and down movement of a masthead light, and so entice vessels further in shore than was safe were widely propagated, but the accusations are general, referring neither to a specific individual, place or occasion. To say that lighthouses and other coastal warning devices were unpopular with coastal dwellers, is not to say that positive means would have been used to lure vessels ashore. Sir John Killigrew found that when he erected the first Lizard light in 1619, his action engaged the local populace, who complained that he took away:

> "God's grace from them, meaning that they shall receive no more benefit from shipwrecks. They have so long been used to reap profit by the calamity of the ruin of shipping that they claim it as hereditary." (52)

When the East Indiaman Albemarle was driven ashore near Polperro in 1708 a request was sent to London for the Company to send down pilots to assist in her refloating for fear, "these Cornish pylots (sic) may run her aground or do some other mischief to make a wreck of her." (53)

It cannot be denied that a certain amount of literary evidence points to the fact that the deliberate wrecking of vessels was not unknown, hard evidence on the matter is however practically non-existent.

It is not surprising that the Cornish miners should be the regional/occupational group most closely associated with wrecking. In few other places did such large concentrations of industrial workers live in such close proximity to the coastline in an isolated part of the kingdom. The Report of the Constabulary Commissioners in 1839, remarks that whilst on ot er parts of the kingdom crowds assembled in hundreds to plunder wrecks, in Cornwall they assembled in thousands.* (54) A Lloyds agent claimed that

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*Commodore Walker wrecked near St. Ives in the 1740's was so impressed by the people of St. Ives who risked their lives to save his crew, that he remarked of the Cornish reputation as wreckers, "How weak a creature is general belief, the dupe of idle fame!" This impression was somewhat corrected when at night a crowd of miners arrived and "were setting about sharing the wreck amongst them." (H.S. Vaughan (ed) The Voyages of Commodore Walker (1928) pp. 90-91).

on the occasion of a wreck at Boscriggan in 1837, two thousand people assembled instantly, and the crowd afterwards increased to four thousand. (55) Between four and five thousand people were estimated to have been at a wreck at Sennon in 1838. This latter claim was made in a letter submitted as evidence to the 1839 commission. The letter gives a detailed description of a wrecking incident which is worth quoting as an illustration of a typical wrecking scene:

> "On arriving at the spot I found the coastguard of the stations adjoining doing their utmost to protect the cargo, with which the beach was covered for the space of a mile. It consisted of pipes of wine, casks of brandy, tobacco, cotton, liqueurs etc. There were 4,000 or 5,000 people of all classes staving in the casks, drinking the liquor and wine, and plundering the property of every description —— hundreds of women with pails, pits, jars and other vessels, carrying it into the country in all directions. We destroyed and upset many hundreds of these vessels in our passage down to the wreck, and proceeded to protect the full casks, which were surrounded by many hundreds of men who threatened to destroy the coastguard when driven away, and armed themselves with staves and pieces of iron from the wreck. It was impossible, in such a case, with our force of 25 men, in such an extent of coast, to preserve the whole of the property. After every exertion that could be made, 41 casks of wine, with a quantity of cotton, cork, staves, etc. were secured and placed near each other, which were protected during the night, and by Monday evening removed to Penzance.
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> I beg to state that we were under the necessity of using the fire-arms during part of the above proceedings, in preservation of our lives; but it was over the heads of the plunderers, and the swords were only used in striking with the backs over their hands; but this was after the Riot Act had been read, and there has not been any bloodshed. The names of some of the parties who committed assault, and in whose possession plundered property was found, have been given in to the local authorities; but as some special constables who arrived late at night, were unable or unwilling to identify parties who were taken, the number of the obstructors in the execution of this duty, who have been recognised, amounts only to two, and those with property in their possession are 15, which cases are now before the magistrates for further proceedings." (56)

Popular tradition often tells of the clergy being implicated in wrecking

activities, if not as wreckers then as knowing receivers of wrecked property. The story of the clergyman, also told in places outside of the county, who begged his congregation to stop when they were rushing out of church on news that a wreck had been sighted, has been transmitted in verse by Commander Shore in his Old Fowey Days:

> "Stop! Stop! cried he, at least one prayer,
> Let me get down, and all start fair." (57)

Congregations were certainly known to leave divine service in a hurry if a wreck were sighted. A congregation in 1720 rushed out of church with hatchets in hand when a ship was seen to be struggling off-shore. They perhaps had taken their hatchets to church with them in the knowledge that the weather was bad enough to make them potentially useful. (58)

The records of the Penzance Customs House reveal that the Rev. Thomas Whitford of Cury was discovered to be in possession of wine from the Lady Lucy of Bordeaux wrecked at Gunwallee in 1739. (59) Richard Polwhele found when he moved into the vicarage at Manaccan that the wine left in the cellar by his predecessor tasted suspiciously of salt water, it having been "picked up at wrecks." (60) An entry in the Wendron parish register, "James Hill, a man of good repute, shot by the volunteers of Helston at the wreck of a vessel stranded at Poljew", does not really suggest any strong disapproval on the part of the recording clergyman. (61)

John Wesley was as firm an opponent of wrecking as he was of smuggling. At Cubert in 1776 he asked if, "that scandal of Cornwall, the plundering of wrecked vessels", still persisted. The reply was that it did as much as ever, but Methodists would have nothing to do with it. (62) It was an optimistic reply. Many Cornishmen were able to reconcile religion with wrecking, as the Rev. C.G. Smith found out in 1818:

> "A few in this neighbourhood, it seems, having a little more light than the others, scrupled to visit a wreck that cam on shore last winter, on a Lord's Day, lest it should be breaking the Sabbath; but they gathered all their implements

> into a public house, and waited until the clock struck twelve — at midnight, therefore they rushed forward all checks of conscience being removed." (63)

Individual Methodists may have renounced wrecking, but clearly if crowds measured in thousands participated in west Cornwall where the influence of Methodism was so strong, then there must have been many who were able to reconcile wrecking with religion as easily as they could smuggling. The old story of a man's retort to his wife, who had told him that he should renounce wrecking, (or in some versions smuggling) because Mr. Wesley was against it: "Wesley? Wesley? what do 'ee knaw about wrecking?" has a ring of truth.

eferences

(1) P.P. 1841 p. 95
(2) Borlase p. 312
(3) Pryce p. 35
(4) See J.H. Drew, Samuel Drew M.A. (1861) and J.B. Cornish, The Autobiography of a Cornish Smuggler (Truro 1894)
(5) W.O. 1/989 f. 333 from Customs Officer at Fowey, St. Austell 15th March 1766.
(6) Hist. Mss. Commission Mss. of Earl of Dartmouth Vol. iii (1896) p. 177
(7) W.O. 1/989 loc. cit.
(8) J. Vivian, Tales of the Cornish Smugglers (Truro 1969) 16-17
(9) A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, The Cornish Miner (1927) p. 63
(10) Borlase loc. cit.
(11) P.A.S. Pool, "William Borlase, the scholar and the man", Jn. of Royal Institution of Cornwall N.S. Vol. v. Pt. 2 (1966) p. 147
(12) R. Polwhele, History of Cornwall Vol. iii (1806) p. 100
(13) N.L. Douch, Cornish Inns (Truro 1966) p. 26
(14) J. Wesley, Letters (ed. J. Telford 1931) iii p. 143
(15) Minutes of the Methodist Conference 1744-1798 (1812) p. 13
(16) J. Wesley, Journal 24. 7.1753 Pearce p. 115
(17) ibid. 18. 9.1762 Pearce p. 141
(18) J. Wesley, Letters vi p. 59
(19) T. Shaw, History of Cornish Methodism (Truro 1967) p. 29
(20) ibid. 30-1
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(22) Douch opp. cit. p. 32
(23) Cornish, opp. cit. p. 3
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TRADE UNIONISM AND POLITICAL RADICALISM AMONG THE MINERS

Trade Unionism and Political Radicalism

In 1888, Cornish mining was described as an industry, and Cornwall as an area, which had "escaped the disturbing influences of the industrial revolution." (1) The writer was suggesting that the heightening of class conflict, and the emphasis on the cash nexus as the only link between master and man which he regarded as characteristic of the industrial revolution elsewhere, did not appear very noticeable in Cornwall.

The absence of effective trade unionism* and the weakness of political radicalism among the Cornish miners was a cause of frequent comment in the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, the credit for this industrial passivity and social quietism has been attributed to two main influences; Methodism, and the tribute system. In the following pages an analysis of the relationship of Methodism to political and industrial quietism, will be followed by an account of the Chartists' efforts in Cornwall in 1839. This was the most determined attempt to win the miners over to political radicalism, and accordingly provides the best opportunity of examining the effect of Methodist opposition on a specific movement at a specific period. The tribute system will then be examined in the context of industrial relations, in particular, the extent to which it can serve as an explanatory factor for the rarity of strikes and combinations in the industry.

Because the writer considers that the weakness of radicalism and unionism in Cornwall cannot be satisfactorily explained solely by reference to Methodism and the tribute system, but only by reference to the whole context of the social and industrial organisation of the mining districts; this context will be examined. Finally some attention will be paid to some less significant aspects of the industry which taken together exercised some

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*C.f. the Webbs, "Among the tin, lead, and copper miners Trade Unionism is, as far as we can ascertain, absolutely unknown." (History of Trade Unionism (1911 ed.) p. 421)

influence over the reactions of the miners, and contributed something to the establishment of a climate in which unionism failed to flourish.

Methodism, Social Quietism and Industrial Discipline

The Cornish miners generally received a good press from nineteenth century writers. Wilkie Collins found them in 1850; "a cheerful, contented race", with the views of the working men, "remarkably moderate and sensible." In fact he had never met with "so few grumblers anywhere." (2) J.R. Leifchild, one of the most experienced of Victorian mine inspectors, found nothing in the miners of 1850 which "indicated that wildness of ancestry which is pointed out by tradition and antiquarian research." (3)

By contrast, the miners of the eighteenth century, were described as wild and unruly, half savages at best; a reputation for which their marked proclivities for rioting, smuggling, and wrecking were to a large degree responsible.

The contrast has been overdrawn. Many of the descriptions were penned with little or no real knowledge of the county. Joseph Farrington observed this in 1810 when he contrasted the favourable impressions which he formed of the miners on his visits to the county with the wild impressions sometimes formed by those who had not visited the county. (4)

The contrast between eighteenth century barbarism and nineteenth century model labour force has been most emphasised by Methodist writers from Wesley on. His journals are in themselves a record of his triumph in winning over a half-savage race of godless miners. Methodist historians have traditionally presented the Wesleyan story in these terms with the result that the "before" and "after" states of the Cornish miners have been over-drawn to become a commercial for the Methodist church.

Sufficient writers from outside the church have commented on the changed character of the Cornish miner from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries for this viewpoint to be taken as an exaggeration rather than a

misrepresentation. The regular appearance of the miners as rioters in the State Papers of the eighteenth century is in marked contrast to the rarity of their appearance in the Home Office papers of the nineteenth century as radicals, chartists or unionists. It is also clear that Wesleyanism grew to have so marked an influence in the Cornish mining villages, that it would be foolish to ignore it in any attempt to explain behaviourial characteristics of that occupational group.

An indication of the possible social effects of the teachings of a religious movement often lies in an examination of the meaning which that movement attaches to evil. In the case of the Wesleyans, sin and evil were individualistic, the moral failing of individuals to live in proper accord with God's commandments. Niebuhr has justly pointed out that the Methodist movement, at least until some of the nineteenth century splits took place, remained in the control of men who had been born and breed in the middle classes, and who were not impressed so much by the social evils from which the poor suffered as by the vices to which they had succumbed. (5)

This is not to say that Methodism regarded the social system of its day as perfect, but that it placed the emphasis on the individual, and regarded social evils as the aggregate of individual sins. John Wesley's writings reveal a deep, and sometimes perceptive sympathy with the poor of his day. His record of personal charity was remarkable, and it was an example which he expected other Methodists to follow. Nevertheless, even when clearly aware of the existence of a social evil, he tended to ascribe its cause to individual sin, and its cure to moral reformation. Typical both of this attitude, and of his innate political conservatism, was his feeling toward the unreformed parliament. He had no interest in any movement for political democracy, any more than he would relinquish his own absolute rule over the Methodist society, but he was passionately concerned to remedy the sins of bribery and drunkenness at elections.

Realising the deficiencies of the corn supply for the poor in bad harvest years, (he writes with what almost amounts to approval of a food riot in Sligo in 1758: "and this they did, with all the calmness and composure imaginable and without striking or hunting anyone.") (6) He emphasised not the activities of grain monopolists, and farmers maintaining high prices, but the cereal demands of the brewing and distilling trades, whose effect was only marginal. Temperance could thus become the cure for grain shortage.

As much as by this individualist ethic, Methodism was characterised by its political and social quietism. As Dr. Hobsbawm has pointed, "economic conditions were a matter of fate, rather than for struggle." (7) An omnipotent deity intervenes at every stage and in every detail of life. The preachers spoke of holiness as something divorced from the ordinary duties of life. They dwelt upon the rewards and punishments of the world to come in a way which was bound to make Methodists insensitive to the conditions under which they actually lived, and give them a high level of acceptance of things as they were. There is also inherent in the quietism of delayed reward, a notion of ethereal revenge; the converse of the long suffering labourer wearing his crown of glory in heaven, is the mine owner or factory boss burning in the fires of hell.

This atmosphere of quietistic sufferance can be termed the <u>negative</u> contribution of Methodism to the retardation of political and industrial militancy in Cornwall. Two more effects need to be noticed: the <u>positive opposition</u> of Methodism to radical movements and organisations, and the <u>competitive opposition</u> provided by the connexion. By this last category is meant the effect of Methodism in competing with radical movements for the attention of the masses, and more specifically for the services of those members of the mining class who possessed talents of leadership and organisational ability.

The negative effect* needs to be examined first in that it describes an atmosphere of passivity which would be of equal importance in accounting for the weakness of both industrial and political or social protest. The question is whether the strongly influential cultural factor of Methodism produced in the Cornish miner an attitude of mind, and an outlook o life which might to some extent account for his quietism.

This effect of Methodism was remarked by a visitor to Cornwall within the lifetime of John Wesley himself. William Beckford who in 1787 described the unpleasant conditions in which the Gwennap miners lived and worked, went on to say:

> "Piety, however as well as gin, helps to fill up their leisure moments, and I was told that Wesley who came apostolising into Cornwall a few years ago, preached in this very spot to above 7,000 followers. Since this period, Methodism has made a very rapid progress, and has been of no trifling service in diverting the attention of these sons of darkness from their present condition to the glories of the life to come." (8)

1787 is early to find such an observation being made. In the nineteenth century it was made much more frequently, and without the cynical tone of Beckford. It can be found in Barham's influential report of 1842:

> "Evidence of the most conclusive kind of the real influence of the great doctrines of revelation on the heart of the miner is constantly exhibited in an habitually excellent and religious life, in equanimity under suffering and privation, and in calmness and resignation where death is known to be inevitable. Nothing can indeed be more admirable, than the cheerful confidence with which, in trust of a future life, the miner contemplates that termination, often an early one, of his labours." (9)

It can be noticed in the case of individuals like the Cornish poet John Harris, both a miner and a class leader. A verse of one of his poems,

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*This negative effect is what Max Weber understood as the 'theodicy of suffering' i.e. the way in which religion gives meaning to suffering, thereby changing it from a source of revolution to a vehicle of redemption. (See P.L. Berger, Invitation to Sociology (Penguin ed. 1966) p. 134.

contrasts the sufferings of the miner with the joy that he could yet feel in the redemption:

> "A miner in his smokey cave,
> Amid his coarse employ
> In clouds of darkness visible
> Thus sweetly sang for joy
> His toil wet face and brow were pale
> And very ill he seemed
> When carolling those thrilling words
> Mankind are all Redeemed." (10)

In his autobiography after relating the hardships of his life as a child labourer in the mines, Harris remarks: "Yet I never complained, nor would I if the same sharp scene had to be enacted again. God had placed me there, and I knew it was right." (11) Similar sentiments occur in the memoir of James Walters a miner who sustained an internal injury working underground, but continued to work there long after he knew it was destroying him, because of the necessity of supporting his family. He died in 1811 at the age of thirty, saying shortly before his death:

> "I love my wife, and I love my children; but I love Jesus Christ a thousand times better. I can give them all up to go to Jesus."* (12)

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*These are straight forward examples of fatalism and the transference of hopes to another world. They differ in degree from the raw spiritual emotionalism which can be found in the diaries of some individuals. It is hardly without a shudder that the modern reader can take the following extract from the diary of the St. Just Methodist, John Tresize, who died an early death from consumption:

> "This morning I brought up a quantity of blood. This reminds me I am soon to die: but what does it matter, since I can now say, 'O death where is they sting? O grave where is thy victory? Religion is becoming sweeter, and sweeter still. I cast myself on the care of him, who I know will care for me. This morning I fell on my knees with the blood almost preventing respiration, not to ask for the removal of my affliction, but for grace, support and comfort, and I found the Lord faithful to his promise; for he blessed me there. The day was a good one. 'The path of the Just is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day'. O what a mercy, when I perceive the blood coming out of my mouth, to feel the blood of Jesus flowing into my soul, and enabling me even then to rejoice!"

(R. Treffry, Memoir of John Edward Tresize (1837) entry for 2nd June 1833)
Fatalism of a less complex kind is exampled by the West Briton report of 1853 that miners in the parishes of Gwennap and Stithians were refusing to have their children vaccinated, "as they say they will suffer the Lord to work his will." (West Briton 12th August 1853).

This insensitivity to conditions of life and labour, was not just an unsought side-effect of Methodist teaching. Such sufferance was positively exalted by the movement. The Methodist periodical the Cornish Banner carried an article in 1846 entitled, 'The Cornish Miner; or The Blessed Effects of Piety in Humble Life'. This was a portrait of a miner claimed to be typical, and who might be fairly taken to represent the Methodist ideal of the Cornish miner. After a disasterous tribute bargain, this man and his family were brought to the verge of destitution, yet:

> "No rankling ill-will to those whom Providence had placed in easier circumstances arose in their minds. No hatred to their employers, or rebellious thoughts against the government of the country, for a moment found a place in their hearts. They laboured, they sorrowed, they suffered; but they patiently endured." (13)

Fatalism is perhaps not an unexpected characteristic of a labour working in close contact with sudden death.* There is however a difference between

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*For examples of the promotional use to which evangelicals were prepared to put mine disasters, see the folder of broadsheets published on such occasions, in the County Record Office, Truro. Extracts from two specimens are given here as evidence of the general nature of such broadsheets. The first was published in 1858 after seven men had been killed in a cave in at Porkellis Mine:

> "What dangers stand on every side,
> Our daily path of life,
> On sea, or land, or underground,
> What accidents are rife.
>
> How thoughtless and how unconcern'd,
> In trifling mood we go,
> No thought how we shall heaven gain,
> Or 'scape from endless woe.
>
> 'Twas thus with many on that day,
> While at their work they stood,
> They laughed and joked, and often swore,
> But thought of nothing good.
>
> And this is frequently the way
> Our miners spend their time
> Till unprepar'd, some accident
> Cuts short their earthly time.

ootnote cont ue overleaf.

Great God, in mercy stay thine hand,
May this a warning be,
May sinners need no other call,
To bring them unto thee.

May they but think of those who lie,
Deep in Porkellis Mine
So many fathoms down below,
Cut off just in their prime.

***

The second example was composed after an accident in North Great Work Mine in 1859 in which two men were buried in a land slip. The final two verses of the poem run as follows:

"May miners one and all prepare,
Lest by some accident,
They may be hurried from this life,
With no time to repent.

May every one a warning take,
And heed the chas'ning rod;
Reader! while yet it's called to-day,
PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!"

the fatalism of habit, and the passive acceptance of this world's trials which too much emphasis on the world to come entails. The tribute system even made it possible for this attitude of resignation to extend into the area of wage levels. In normal circumstances it would not be natural for a labourer faced with a sizable wage cut, to see behind it the hand of God rather than that of the owners. Under the tribute system, with its large element of chance, the miners could more easily see the hand of God, testing, punishing or rewarding. Thus when William Murrish struck it rich in 1853, good Methodist as he was, he knew where the real credit lay:

> "I feel thankful to say the Lord has greatly prospered me at the mine lately. You know I was working hard, the two months before you left. I told you we had done pretty well, but I did not know we had got so much by a good deal, as we really had, — more than £95 per man, the two months." (14)

When John Harris experienced similar fortune, it was 'Providence' which had blessed his labours. (15) As for low wages they could be borne in the knowledge that the ways of the Lord were strange, and even the faithful must be subjected to rigid tests of faith from time to time.

Methodist apologists have praised this quietism on the grounds that it enabled the mine labourer to accept with equanimity the harsh realities of life, and live a reasonably happy life, in an unsavoury environment. But the conditions which aged a young miner and brought him to an early grave, which made it a common sight to see in the mining villages white-faced men in warm overcoats on summer days, living out their last weeks before the miners' disease finally triumphed, were perfectly capable of improvement. Bad air, long ladder climbs, wet changing rooms and the periodic malnutrition produced by a variable income were all capable of remedy. The tendency of the Methodist miners to accept as God's will conditions which were capable of human remedy, must certainly have helped the adventurers to save pennies at the expense of human life and suffering.

The positive opposition provided by Methodism is most clearly seen in its hostile reaction to Chartism, and will be more fully examined when that specific example is discussed below. It can first be shown that Methodist hostility to radicalism pre-dated the Chartist era.

The political conservatism of the Wesleyan leaders is hardly d ied by the movements own historians.* In 1819, following Peterloo, the Methodist Committee of Privileges, advocated expulsion for any member who associated with radical organisations. It congratulated itself on the "loyal spirit and demeanour" of the societies in general, and trusted that Christian discipline "on the poor classes of our Society will be found highly beneficial in discountenancing the machinations of the ill-disposed, and in leading the suffering poor of our manufacturing districts to bear their privations with patience." (15) It becomes easier to understand the hostile reactions of people like William Cobbett to Methodism when one sees them in this context instead of that of the generalised claims of later historians of Methodism's great services to the Labour movement.

Jacobinism did not present a very serious problem to the authorities in Cornwall, although there were Jacobin overtones to the food riots of some years. So there is little evidence on which to base any discussion of the reaction of Cornish Methodism to it. In 1799, the Rev. Richard Polwhele, as fervant an anti-Methodist as he was an anti-Jacobin, linked the Methodists to the Jacobins in a letter to a neighbouring clergyman. In reply he received

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*John Wesley's ardent eighteenth century toryism is well known, as is the conservatism of the movement's most influential figures in the early nineteenth century. For an interesting example of Methodist political thought see Adam Clarke's Origin and End of Civil Government (1822) which warns, "Rebellion is no cure for public evils ... meddle not with them that are given to change." (quoted by M. Edwards, The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Napoleonic Period (Ph.D. Thesis, London 1934 7-8). It is true that a considerable modification of political outlook characterised some of the sects which split from the parent body, but as has been shown above (p. 265) Wesleyanism very much predominated in Cornish Methodism. Primitive Methodism, politically the most radical of the sects was very weak in the county by comparison.

a statement that his Cornish neighbour would be happy to see all his own parishioners Methodists at that moment. He accused Polwhele of misrepresenting Methodism by, "coupling it with schism and sedition." He reminded him of the pamphlet which John Wesley had written at the time of the American Rebellion, and added, "for the present times, you are more unhappy still in your charge of disaffection." (16)

Tom Paine was the author of the Age of Reason as well as of the Rights of Man. The first publication of the former child labourer in the Cornish mines, Samuel Drew, who was subsequently to take charge of Methodist Connexional publications, was an attack on the atheism of the Age of Reason. That Drew's publication was a work which served a political as well as a theological purpose is evident from the favourable report which he received of it from a fellow Wesleyan who employed it in his circuit work:

> "When I was stationed at Blackburn, there were in that town many professed disciples of Paine. Several of them acknowledges, that Mr. Drew's answer to the first part of the Age of Reason, had made more impression on their minds, and occasioned them more difficulty in attempting to reply to its arguments than any other work that had fallen into their hands." (17)

The competitive opposition of Methodism is also most apparent from a specific examination of Chartism. The channeling of attention and effort into the Methodist cause was however a general phenomenon. Cornwall was said in 1871 to be a religious county in the sense that, "Human interest flows strongly in the channel of religion ... The stable topics of 'corn, currency, and catholics' excite little or no interest in this sequestered region." (18)

The miner with oratory pretensions was said to prefer, "the pulpit to the platform", and, "instead of inciting the minds of his audience by pointing out the rights of man, and the tyranny of all placed in authority over him, delights to expatiate on the terrible torments that await the impenitent sinner." (19)

There is a fourth aspect of the relationship of Methodism to Industrial passivity. This is more positive than the effect of a general quietistic atmosphere. By emphasising certain character traits and condemning others, Methodism contributed an inner force which aided in the disciplining of the labour force of the Industrial Revolution. (20)

Max Weber has suggested that the most important opponent with which the spirit of capitalism in the sense of a definite standard of life claiming ethical sanction has had to struggle, is that type of attitude and reaction to new situations which he called, 'traditionalism'. (21) In an earlier chapter the preference of the labour force of the eighteenth century for an irregular working rhythm with an inbuilt leisure preference has been discussed. If labour is to be efficient it must be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling. It was this kind of labour attitude which Methodism helped install in the Cornish miners. It emphasised the importance of time,* of diligence and it elevated idleness to a sin of the first magnitude, leaving its definition broad enough to cover perhaps any activity which did not come under the headings of work, prayer, and a minimum requirement of sleep. There was thus a direct coincidence between attitudes and activities which the employing capitalist would call unproductive, and those which the Methodists would describe as sinful.

Joseph Priestly offered congratulations to the Methodists in 1791: "to you is the civilisation, the industry and sobriety of great numbers of the labouring part of the community owing." (22) Cornish Methodists were quick to claim credit for the good habits of the Cornish miners, and there were many who were prepared to concede their case. Richard Treffry Junior boasted in 1837:

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*C.f. the biography of the prominent Cornish Methodist Samuel Drew: "Take time by the forelock, was one of his favourite phrases and rules of conduct: the family clock was therefore, kept a quarter of an hour in advance of the town time." (Life of S. Drew p. 208)

> "Rescued from a state of moral degradation, which at present it is not easy to conceive, we have now a peasantry rarely equalled and probably nowhere surpassed in frugality, order, intelligence and general conscientiousness." (23)

The Rev. John Riles thought that among the effect of the Great Revival of 1814 was that "the idle are become industrious." (24) The Rev. Richard Warner, an Anglican, was prepared to give credit to the Wesleyans in 1808 for the complete moral reformation of a large body of men who, "without their exertion would probably have still been immersed in the deepest spiritual darkness and the greatest moral turpitude", (25) while a writer in 1817 found the "habits of inordinance", gradually fading away under, "the soul subduing power" of Wesleyan Methodism. (26) The Cornish Banner claiming in 1846 that great numbers of the mining population of Cornwall were truly converted to God, claimed:

> "to the same extent as they are influenced by this holy religion, are they made, sober, industrious, and patient in their temporal calling." (27)

Methodist influence in this direction extended to the child labourers. A captain giving evidence in 1842 remarked that when he first took charge at the mine, the boy surface workers were very ill-disciplined, "pelting and splashing each other, and hooting passers-by." They subsequently became very quiet, and for the previous three months, had been holding prayer meetings amongst themselves in their dinner break. He thought the boys had become more diligent since they had begun to hold their meetings. (28) A surface captain at Tincroft remarked to the same commissioners, that he always observed some improvement in order among the child workers when a Sunday School had been established near them. (29)

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Chartism and the Cornish Miners

In March 1839, the General Convention of the Industrious Classes decided to send missionaries to explain the principles of Chartism to those parts of Britain as yet unrepresented in the movement. Two of the missionaries, Robert Lowery and Abraham Duncan, were sent to Cornwall to preach the radical cause to the miners. Neither of the two men had had any previous connexion with the county, nor had the Convention received any communication from it. (1)

They arrived in Falmouth on the evening of Monday 4th March, having taken ship from London. They were but little impressed with Falmouth which they described as a typical prostitute ridden sea port. (2) They contented themselves with distributing copies of the National Petition and set out for Truro early on the following day, where they proposed holding their first meeting. Being unable to book a hall, they decided to hold an open air meeting in the High Cross, and sent the town crier around to announce it. The meeting was successful. About a thousand people attended and it lasted for some two and a half hours. (3) As a result of this meeting they received their first attentions from the local press; the West Briton reported:

> "(they) harangued the populace for a considerable time. Their addresses evinced considerable talent, but were highly inflammatory. We hope the good sense of Cornishmen will prevent them from being tainted with notions so wild and visionary as those of the Chartists." (4)

The following day they went into the heart of the mining district and held a meeting at Redruth, despite the warning of a local magistrate that they would be arrested if there were any disturbance. The meeting was well attended. (5) On the following day they returned to Truro, this time holding their meeting in the Town Hall. Resolutions adopting the Petition and in support of the National Convention were passed. (6) Lowery in his report to Lovett of this meeting mentions three persons:

> "We got a working man Mr. Heath to take the chair, Mr. Spurr and Mr. Rowe moved and seconded the acceptance of the National Petition." (7)

Neither in his report or in his autobiography does Lowery have anything further to say about these three men. This is curious in view of the fact that all three were already well known locally as Chartists before the arrival of the missionaries. Richard Spurr had in fact presided over a Chartist meeting in Truro on the 29th January, some five weeks before the missionaries first set foot in the county. (8) He had had an active career locally as a radical, and continued to pay a role in the movement after he moved to London, where he was arrested on a sedition charge in January 1840. (9) These men were the nucleus of a small group of radicals, based in Truro who were well known to the local press. Yet Lowery makes no mention of the fact that he had come across an existing group of Chartists with whom the General Convention had not yet made contact.

After Truro, the missionaries held open air meetings in the mining district at Chacewater and at Camborne. At the latter town, the 'Whigs' had bribed the crier, and since he would not announce the meeting the missionaries had to have hand bills printed and distributed at the neighbouring mines. (10) About this time they conceived the idea of holding a final meeting at the Wesleyan shrine of Gwennap Pit, of which intention and its attempted implementation more will be said below.

On their first Sunday they attended the Wesleyan Chapel at Camborne, where Duncan noticed something which dimmed somewhat his hopes of Chartist success in the far west:

> "My Scotch friend, being a phrenologist, observed emphatically, The development of the woman is splendid, but did ye ever see such a set of bad heads as the men have?" (11)

Duncan never did get to like the Cornishmen. Their womenfolk were another matter:

> "Duncan says the Cornwall girls have almost tempted him to marry, would the Convention allow anything for a woman?" (12)

From Camborne they moved westwards to Hayle, then on to St. Ives and

Penzance, and returned once again to Falmouth. At St. Ives Duncan's growing Cornuphobia was further intensified:

> "As I was walking over so many of the working men lifted their hats to me in passing, it could only be because I had a good coat on. I cannot bear such servility to the appearance of wealth." (13)

On their return to Falmouth they decided to have a meeting in the town, and despite the harrassing of small boys gratuitously armed with fireworks by the local Whigs, they held a fairly well attended meeting. (14) They next went to neighbouring Penryn and on the following day returned again to Penzance. By now they had been sixteen days in the county and were meant to return to London at the end of the week. By this time they had become aware of the magnitude of the task of agitating the miners and requested permission to remain until 6th April:

> "In fact two months would be too little to agitate this county, the people being so scattered." (15)

From Penzance they visited the old mining town of St. Just, went on to Goldsithney, and then visited Camborne again. On 26th March, they were at St. Ives, but this time were unable to get a meeting together for reasons which will be discussed below. All that remained now was the final meeting which they proposed holding in Gwennap Pit, after which they were to return to London.

From the foregoing narrative, it will be seen that the missionaries concentrated their activities on the mining districts of west Cornwall. They seem not to have ventured east of Truro. They had visited the larger centres twice; a tactical decision, because the scattered nature of the population in the mining districts made it the best course to hold large central meetings, trusting that the spread of news would bring the miners into the second meeting. (16)

The reports which the missionaries sent back to the movement's secretary in London were coloured by a qualified optimism. Thus on 12th March Lovett read to the Convention a letter from them which gave a most cheering account

of their reception in the county, and of the effect of their agitation, proving that nothing was wanting to rouse the community, than a little trouble on the part of the Convention. (17)

In another letter Lowery described the reaction of the miners to their mission:

> "Our meetings are well attended, they come from curiosity, they are radicals and do not know it, they are poor and oppressed and the moment they hear our expositions they adopt them." (18)

With the hindsight of historians we could add another line, "and then they go home and forget them." For the truth is that despite Lowery's optimism, no Chartist movement did develop amongst the Cornish miners. In his letters we can see the difficulties which the mission faced. Difficulties which tend to outweigh the presence of the large crowds which the missionaries gleefully claimed assembled to hear them. By the end of their first week in the county, they had realised that they were addressing a labouring people for whom the great political awakening was still in the future:

> "... the people have never heard of the agitation and know nothing of political principles, it is all uphill work, were we not going at it neck or nothing we would never get a meeting. The trades people are afraid to move and the working men want drilling before entering the ranks." (19)

So unused to political agitation were the miners, that they "appeared thunderstruck at anyone talking so boldly of authority they had thought unassailable." (20) There was little groundwork on which to build:

> "The people here have never heard Politics, nor had any agitation on that question, when we enter a place we know no one, and if we ask if there are any Radicals they don't seem to know or when they answer in the affirmative it turns out the persons are mere Whigs or Anti-Corn Law men." (21)

Lowery never forgot the response to his enquiry if there were any radicals in town which he received at St. Ives:

> "'A what Master', said he, with a vacant stare, 'Any Radicals or Chartists?' said I. I shall never forget the vacuity and bewilderment of his countenance. 'No', answered he, 'they catch nothing here but pilchards and mackerel.'" (22)

Lowery was from Newcastle, and well acquainted with the northern pitmen, with whom he compared the tinners, pointing out that the pitmen too had been ignorant of politics only eight years ago, (23) and he thought that Cornwall might well become:

> "A rich mine of Radical ore which if skillful miners bring it forth may be fashioned into weapons that will do fearful execution on the host of misgovernment." (24)

The active opposition which the mission met with in Cornwall requires a more specific examination. "The magistrate had condemned, the parsonocracy had preached, and the tyrant masters threatened", wrote Lowery to the Northern Liberator.(25) A letter sent to the Convention at the close of the mission, written to appoint Lowery and Duncan as the county's delegates to the convention, praises the efforts of the two men, but continues to say that the cause would have been still further advanced:

> "had it not been for the interference and false intimidations held out by the Magistracy, Clergy and Employers, (who we feel proud to say are not the most intelligent men in our county). The Magistrates in many places have threatened to issue warrants for the apprehension of the missionaries. The Clergy who are always timid of any alterations in our glorious constitution as it fits to term it, employ themselves instead of watching over their flocks in going to every cottage door, and declaring to the women if their husbands sign the National Petition they would subject themselves to the penalty of transportation. The employers intimating to the men that work under them, if they attended the meeting or signed the National Petition, they would directly discharge them." (26)

At Falmouth the clergyman had forbidden the town crier to announce the meeting, which did not suffer for he visited all the houses telling them that he was not allowed to tell them of the meeting. (27) The Mayor of Penzance was thrown into such confusion by the arrival of the missionaries, that he straight away wrote to the Home Office asking for advice:

> "I write to your Lordship from a part of her Majesty's dominions in which there is no clashing of interests between the agriculturist and the manufacturer —— in which the labouring classes

> are in constant employment, where poverty is unknown, where loyalty is proverbial and contentment almost universal —— But all this desirable order of things is threatened to be overturned and society disjointed by a party of itinerant politicians who style themselves "Chartists" and profess to be 'Missionary Delegates' from the National Convention." (28)

He claimed that at their meeting in that town, the delegates had fearlessly used seditious and inflammatory language, insulted the Queen, abused her ministers, ridiculed the established institutions of the country and called upon the working classes to arm themselves and obtain by force redress from their grievances, and sign a National Petition "insisting on many unconstitutional arrangements."*

If the delegates were preaching physical force, and were using seditious language, then they were disobeying specific instructions from the Convention. If this had been the case then it seems unlikely that the magistrates would have only threatened. Perhaps an exaggerated reaction could result from one of Lowery's favoured methods of oration. Noticing gentry observing him from the back of a crowd, he would look directly at them, and, in a loud voice, announce, "Fellow country men, I stand here to preach revolution", and would pause to enjoy their startled countenances before continuing; "But mark well my words and do not misconstrue them, revolution simply means change, and the revolution I advocate is a change from bad to good, from corrupt and extravagant government to a real representation, retrenchment and reform." (29)

Not all the gentry reacted in a panic stricken way. The Vicar of Gwennap, was little disturbed by the intrusion of the missionaries into that well populated mining parish. He wrote to the Home secretary too, but apologised for troubling him, he would not have bothered to write at all were it not

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*It was in the Penzance district that the mission seems to have most upset the magistrates and clergy. The Vicar of Ludgvan also was disturbed by talk of arms, and of urged resistance to the Poor Law. (P.R.O. H.O. 40/41 Rev. H.G. Graham to Lord John Russell, 16th March 1839).

for the purpose of assuring him that, "a more complete mistake never was committed by the Chartists, than in supposing they could make converts here." Any sensation which their language had caused had completely died away, any effect which they might have made was temporary, and there was no need to fear any permanent organisation. (30)

The editor of the West Briton was similarly confident:

> "We congratulate our mining population on the good sense they have shown in giving no encouragement to the Chartist missionaries." (31)

Large crowds in fact meant little if there were no permanent organization on which to build a solid movement.

It is probable that if Lowery and Duncan had been asked to identify the group whose opposition was their most serious handicap, then despite the determined efforts of the gentry and clergy, they would have named the Methodists and the closely identified tee-totallers. Duncan was especially emphatic on this point:

> "I do not think there can be much love of liberty here; its too full of Methodist chapels, and they are too priest ridden to like freedom."

Lowery too soon took note of the Methodist influence on the miners:

> "The working classes in general were a simple primitive people with strong religious feelings of an excitable temperament. The Methodist style of preaching, however good to work upon their feelings, wanted something of the Presbyterian reasoning to cultivate their understandings." (32)

The West Briton recognised the service which Methodism was rendering the community. "What", it asked, "but our religious light is it that has kept our working classes at peace and free from Chartism." (33)

The relationships between Methodism and Chartism has been often discussed. The hostile attitude of the leaders of Wesleyan Methodism is not in dispute, but equally well attested is the sympathy of some members at local level, especially in the case of the Primitive Methodists. Dr. Wearmouth has shown a considerable involvement in radical movements on the part of many members of this sect. (34)

In the specific case of Cornwall, Dr. Hobsbawm in a short article, concludes that it is probably wisest, "to put the lack of interest in and feebleness of Cornish Chartism down to factors unconnected with the religion of the Cornish." (35) Dr. Harrison in a review of the article, has pointed out that Lowery and Duncan had quite definite views on this matter. (36)

In an earlier chapter (above p. 265) it has been shown that Wesleyan Methodism was the only really significant branch of the Methodist church in west Cornwall, and that its influence can reasonably be expected to have been considerable.

The local leaders of Wesleyan Methodism, were, by this time, not necessarily conservative; the toryism of early Methodism was already giving way to the liberalism of the mid-Victorian years. Men like Thomas Garland were liberal, even reformist, but unlikely to favour immediate universal suffrage. Garland described Chartism as one of, "the noxious weeds that spring from the ground where no care has been taken that it should produce healthful fruits." (37)

It is convenient to examine the effects of Methodism on Cornish Chartism under the main headings already used in the general discussion above. (pp. 352) The most clear cut example of positive opposition was the opposition to the Chartists' proposed final meeting at Gwennap Pit. The Pit was an open air ampitheatre formed originally by a mine subsidence. It had been the favourite preaching place of John Wesley, and was regarded as something of a shrine by the local Methodists. Although the West Briton reported that this meeting took place as intended, it is clear that it did not quite follow its intended pattern. The Cornwall Gazette reported:

> "It will scarcely be credited that these fellows had the assurance to advertise their meeting to be held in the PIT at Gwennap, a place ... consecrated by the ministrations of the venerable founder of Methodism, and still retained by his followers for periodical religious worship. The Methodists however knew better what was due to their own character, and to the memory of Wesley, than to suffer this profanation; the senior minister of the circuit

> very properly repaired to the spot with the parish constables, and kept the gates against all intrusion." (38)

Lowery in his own account of the meeting, shows how in fact the missionaries turned this refusal to their own advantage:

> "The Wesleyan Conference had been written to and had refused the use of the pit, but all would not do. Although it commenced to rain long before the hour of meeting and continued to rain heavily, yet for four long hours did thousands of people stand drenched to the skin, and urged the speaker to go on for they did not mind the wet. There was upwards of 15,000 people on the ground and not a place near to shelter them ... Mr. Duncan then came forward amid great cheering and addressed the people with great energy for an hour and a half. He denounced the aristocracy's plundering of the people, and with withering sarcasm he pointed out the hypocrisy of the bigots who would not let them have the Pit to meet in, though erected by the people's labour. (Here there was a cry of, 'To the Pit', and in three minutes though holding upwards of 6,000 people it was filled —— The speaker refused to go) No they would show them they had the power, but would not use it." (39)

The meeting proceeded to pass an address to the Convention, and appoint Lowery and Duncan as its delegates.

The Vicar of Gwennap mentioned the part which the Wesleyans played in opposing the Chartists in his letter to the Home Secretary:

> "I cannot close without adding my very sincere approbation of the conduct of the Wesleyans of this parish on the occasion. The leaders consulted with me in the most effectual manner to prevent any outbreak, and also to discourage the intruders." (40)

The element of competitive opposition was also strong. Under this heading the Wesleyans are joined by the tee-totallers. The missionaries realised that if any permanent basis for the movement were to be established, then leaders would have to be forthcoming from the miners themselves. "The spirit is raised in the people", wrote Lowery, "but they want leaders to organise them." It was because of Wesleyan and tee-total competition that they despaired of finding these leaders. "The tee-totallers and the Methodists have monopolised the speakers, and their leaders are against us." (41) Duncan was very specific

on this point:

> "They have been taught to believe that tee-totallism is the only cure for all the ills that the flesh is subject to; that all other reforms are idle —— that it is a sin to attend to any other. The Methodists have all Cornwall divided into districts. The tee-totallers keep their division of territory; in each of these they have from six to twelve speakers. They keep up an interchange of these agitators throughout the various districts. Between the religious and the tee-total agitation, a considerable amount of enterprise and talent is absorbed. I could have no objection in young men devoting themselves to both; but it is a fact of which I have ample proof, that were any of these young men to give the mission the smallest countenance, they would never again be permitted to address a religious or tee-total meeting. Toryism and Pharisaical cant is omnipotent in every tee-total committee in Cornwall. These things have been obstructions and hinderances in our way." (42)

That such stiff and direct competition came from the tee-totallers was largely due to the fact that the two movements were more or less contemporary, and while the one had the sanction of the religious majority, the other did not.

James Teare had arrived in Cornwall in January 1838. The effect of his arrival was instantaneous and his impact enormous. A hundred and fifty persons signed the pledge at his first meeting at St. Austell. Throughout 1838 and 1839, the movement's progress was rapid. In February 1839, the Ludgvan society was claiming a membership of 800 out of a total population of 2,500. In May the 2,700 members in St. Ives amounted to half the town's population. (43) During the week the Chartist missionaries were at Truro, one hundred and fifty of the citizens signed the pledge. (44) The West Briton even reported that at a Chartist meeting in west Cornwall, a drunken miner signed the National Petition, under the impression that it was the pledge. (45)

Hence it was not only for leaders, but for the attention of the people that the Chartists had to compete, and the people were under strong religious influences. It is true that the Wesleyan authorities were against tee-totalism, but it was not until 1841 that the Conference closed its chapels to tee-total meetings, until then they were uneasily tolerated. The immediate

effect of the attempt to enforce this ban at St. Ives, was the secession of 250 members to form the Tee-total Wesleyan Methodists. (46)

To a large number of the working class Methodists of Cornwall signing the pledge was an extension of their normal religious practice, and hence they came to regard the movement as a religious one, and became exclusive and sectarian. This was a nationwide experience. The Chartist Circular pointed it out in emphasising the case for tee-total Chartism:

> "The true mode of killing drunkenness, and the equally mischievous habit of moderate tippling, is the adoption of the Tee-total pledge. The Chartists, we have reason to believe, are generally in favour of testing the good to be derived from total abstinence. But many of them object to take the pledge from the present organizational societies in consequence of their exclusive or sectarian tendency. Many a man has said to the writer of this, 'I cannot join our Tee-total Society, for while its rules pretend to exclude all discussions on political matters I am constantly insulted and my Chartist principles derided." (47)

Competition between Chartism and the chapels for the attention of the people was clearly seen at St. Ives when Lowery and Duncan returned there for a second meeting, having previously held a successful one. Lowery reported that this time they found it impossible to get an audience because a religious revival had broken out. There were no people for a Chartist meeting, but the chapels were full night and day for three days, during which time many of the shops were shut and many of the people ceased work. Being unable to hold a meeting, the two missionaries went to the chapel and were horrified by the emotional scenes which they witnessed. (48) Disturbed they may have been, but the fact remains that on this occasion at least, in competing for an audience with a religious revival, they were not only losers, but non-starters.

The negative effect of Methodism in providing an atmosphere of acceptance and quietism has been discussed above, and what has been said there applies to the specific case of Chartism as well as to the general case.

The story of Chartism in Cornwall after the return of the missionaries, provides glimpses of a continuance of Chartist activities, but no evidence of

a significant impact having been made.

In June 1839 the miners of the parish of St. Agnes turned out to attend an advertised Chartist meeting, which did not take place, the local press claiming the advertisement was a hoax. In the same week, however, a meeting was held at St. Just. A Plymouth shoemaker being the main speaker, assisted, according to the Tory press, "by two or three other worthies of the same patriotic craft from the off-scourings of Penzance." The speakers were received with hisses and driven out of town by a bombardment of rotten eggs and other unsavourary missiles. (49)

Small groups of Chartists persisted in some of the towns. Richard Spurr, the leader of the Truro group, who had removed to London, continued to forward Chartist literature to be distributed by his wife. Since his departure from the town however, regular meetings seem to have been no longer held. (50)

A group also appears to have existed in Hayle, and were believed responsible for the posting of an inflammatory handbill in that town in August 1839:

> "Brother Countrymen will you suffer Tyrants to go such a length as to murder 3 of your brethren in order to frighten you out of your rights; who is the coward that will suffer half a million of people to rob 20 millions out of their rights and call it the law of the land; you see there is no law nor justice in England; then arise and prepare for action and knock of (sic) the tyrants' head that we may have nothing to do but take our rights, shew yourselves not cowards nor slaves but free Englishmen." (51)

Despite the tone of the poster, the endorsements of the Home Secretary on the transcript which he received, show little apprehension of any threat from Cornish Chartism. Firstly he was of the opinion that there was scarcely a case for instituting Common Law proceedings unless the "mischief" was spreading in the county, and secondly that if the handwriting could be identified, a prosecution at Quarter Sessions might be possible, but it hardly seemed necessary.

At a tee-total meeting in Gwennap in 1840, a visiting speaker told a

crowded meeting that, "he had had opportunities of knowing", that the Chartists who had lately been causing such a sensation were habitual takers of intoxicating liquors, and but for this they would not have been lead into the violent acts which they were guilty of. At the end of the address, forty-eight persons signed the pledge. (52)

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Industrial Relations under the Tribute System*

In the middle years of the nineteenth century, the tribute system won the approval of several writers concerned with problems of industrial relations. Among these writers were men of considerable standing as authorities on economic and social matters; viz. Charles Babbage, Henry Mayhew and John Stuart Mill. These men were sufficiently impressed with the record of industrial relations in the Cornish mines, to recommend the extension of the principles of the tribute system to other industries. Two things in particular impressed them: the diligence and high degree of task application shown by the miners, and the extreme rarity of strikes in the industry.

Babbage thought it desirable that the system should become general, "because no other mode of payment affords to the workmen a measure of success so directly proportioned to the industry, the integrity and the talent which they exert." (1) Mill first wrote of the system in 1845 in the Claims of Labour, stating that the Cornish miners were invariably joint-adventurers in the mining concerns, and, "for intelligence, independence, and good conduct as well as prosperous circumstances, no labouring population in the island is understood to be comparable to the Cornish miners." (2) In his Principles of Political Economy under the paragraph heading "Examples of the association of labourers with capitalists", he again spoke highly of a system which, "produces a degree of intelligence, independence and moral elevation which raises the condition of the Cornish miner far above that of the generality of the labouring class." (3) Two years later, while admitting that he had no first hand knowledge of the working of the system, Mill restated his belief that, "working people are generally found to be particularly intelligent and zealous under such circumstances, and that has always been remarked of Cornish Miners." (4)

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*I have discussed the literature on the tribute system and the incidence of strikes in a review article x, 'The tribute system and the weakness of trade unionism in the Cornish mines' in the Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History No. 21 (Autumn 1970) 24-29.

A writer in 1834, after stating that there were no relationships more difficult to adjust than those between masters and men, put forward the Cornish system as one under which these difficult relationships were made to adjust themselves. (5) Samuel Laing writing in 1842, was equally impressed with the system:

> "This is by many degrees, the brightest picture we have ever met of any considerable portion of the labouring class in England at the present day." (6)

The way in which the tribute system was intended to secure a high degree of task application has been described in an earlier chapter. Broadly speaking, all these writers considered that industrial virtues flowed from associating the labourer with the capitalist in the risks and profits of enterprise. The tribute system was a working model of the identification of the interest of masters and men. There was a certain perfectability about the system to minds nurtured in the axioms of classical economics. The work to be done was put up, and the men bid against each other for the contracts, thus the level of wages could hardly be more perfectly controlled by the demand for labour. When work was scarce, then miners competed more fiercely and so lowered their own wages.

The tangible result of such a system was seen to be the absence of strikes. "So admirably", claims the 1834 description, "does it reconcile all conflicting interests, that strikes among the miners are there unknown."(7) The same point was being emphasised in 1837:

> "The rate of wages, therefore, regulates itself by the circumstances that ought to control it —— the demand for labour. No one has heard of disagreements between the Cornish miners and their employers —— no combinations or unions on the one side or the other exist; nor have turn-outs or strikes been contemplated or attempted." (8)

To a great extent under the tribute system, the miner could see his wages as being governed by his own bargaining ability and by his skill in estimating the potentiality of pitches. The extent to which he could view

himself as a free contractor rather than as a wage labourer, was determined both by this, and by the fact that he was only bound to the mine for the period of the contract, a month or two months. He contract was made directly with the mine through its agent, the captain, and not with any individual who could be identified as the employer. L.L. Price's observation that, "the comparative absence of strike is due, not to the elimination of the capitalist, but to the practical disappearance of the employer", was a valuable insight. (9) The tributer was no capitalist himself, he made free contracts, but he had nothing to sell but his labour. He was, however, in some senses his own employer, since theoretically at least, he could choose the place in which he would work, could bargain for the price at which he would work, and do this not with a single owner, but directly with the agent of the shareholders.

The 'disappearance of the employer' was not just a result of the tribute system allowing the labouring miners to become direct contractors, but was equally a product of the financial organisation of a mining enterprise. To spread risk Cornish mining was conducted on what was known as the Cost Book system. Each mine was owned by a multiplicity of shareholders, the Adventurers. The typical capitalist of the mining industry was not the owner-entrepreneur, but the absent investor, whose holdings were likely to be dispersed rather than concentrated in a single mine. There was no figure in the Cornish Industrial Revolution comparable to the factory boss or colliery owner of the North. Financial management was in the hands of a salaried purser, and men management entrusted to the captains (or agents), who were promoted from the ranks of the skilled miners.

Dr. Hobsbawm has pointed out that, "the feeling that workers as a class opposed employers as a class developed slow and late." This feeling was absent because there was no employer class in daily face to contact with the workers against whom class feelings could crystalize. Dr. Hobsbawm mentions that the first labour dispute occurred in 1831. (10) What was significant

about this dispute is not its date, (it was not strictly speaking the first labour dispute) but the fact that it took place in the industry's one significant mine where ownership and management were in the hands of a single entrepreneur. (11)

In times of low prices tributers gettings would be correspondingly low. In times of unemployment, increased competition would automatically lower their rates. In neither case would their depressed circumstances be necessarily seen as attributable to the acquisitiveness of an employer class, as when a factory master or colliery owner announced wage cuts. It is significant that the only really serious labour dispute before 1866, that of 1853, occurred, not during a time of diminishing gettings, but during a period of rising prices when the miners thought that they were being excluded from their share in that prosperity.* (12)

A potentiality for combination among the miners to exploit the system existed in the possibility of an agreement not to cut tribute prices below a certain level. (13) In practice this was guarded against by a reserve price system. If the lowest bid secured was significantly higher than the Captain's estimation, then it was considered that the last bidder had only the option of settling at the Captain's price. If it were refused, then it was offered in turn to the other bidders. If there were no takers, then it was held over to the next setting, when it would either be taken, or else the Captain would have to lower his price. Generally the first alternative was the case. (14)

In theory the reserve price would fluctuate with the price of tin or copper. In practice the men sometimes suspected that it was being held artificially low in times of rising prices. It was this suspicion which led

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*A speaker at a meeting in 1872 expressed the view that Adventurers were likely to squeeze out as much profit as possible when things improved after a bad time, to compensate for their low profit levels during the bad time. "The dark clouds passed away. The 'good time' came but it came not for them. The Adventurers had been a long time waiting for a return for their outlay, and now it had come they were too greedy to gather it in to think of the patient toilers underground."
(West Briton 27th Jan. 1872).

to the strike of 1853 at St. Just.

The miners of that district held a public meeting because of the prevalent feeling that prices were such that they could be offered better rates. The principal speaker, Henry Smith, urged that wages should be at least £3 a month, and suggested that if a pare thought the terms offered by a captain for a renewal of their contract, were too low, no other pare should take their pitch at the captain's price. About 1,000 to 1,200 miners were present and passed a resolution to this effect. The local press reports say that the meeting was orderly and the language of the speakers, "free from anything like intemperate language." (15)

The resolution was put to the test at Boswidden Mine a fortnight later. It was at this mine that the principal orator, Henry Smith, was employed. At the setting he refused the captain's terms for his pitch. On the following Monday, he again applied for the pitch, was told that no alteration in the price would be made. That evening, the entire labour force of Boswidden struck work, alleging that Smith was "a marked man, and they would stand or fall with him." Following a public meeting, a general strike of the miners of St. Just was called until the Boswidden men should be reinstated at an advanced price. At a second meeting some of the more militant demanded that they should also insist on the captain's dismissal, and that unless this condition were met, no St. Just man would work at Boswidden for the next twelve months.

Seven days later between 1,500 and 2,000 miners met and voted to continue the strike. They also resolved that any shop-keeper who refused to give credit to striking miners would be black-listed. After this meeting, they paraded the parish behind a banner bearing the word 'Union'. They alleged that Smith could not possibly get a living on the terms offered by the captain, and that he was a marked man on account of having been a leader in the food riots of 1847.

So far as the other miners were concerned, the issue was solely the

support of the Boswidden men. It was explicitly stated that there was no complaint against wage levels at the other mines, but that at Boswidden rates it was impossible to make a living. By this time some of the miners were returning to work, even at Boswidden, but the majority stayed out. (16) At a meeting of representatives of the men and the adventurers a week later, new demands were put forward by the men, this time applying to other mines as well as Boswidden. They demanded an increase of 25% in the price for tin, and improvements in the arrangements respecting the mine doctor and club. Many of the mines gave into these demands, but three important ones, Botallack, Wheal Owles, and Balleswidden would not. (17) There are no further accounts of the strike in the local press, so presumably in the course of the following week, one side or the other must have given way.

A differing account of the origins of the strike is also reported in the local press. This account, if correct, casts light on two important aspects of the conflict, viz. the demand for the dismissal of the captain, and the fact that wage levels were regarded as unacceptably low only at Boswidden. It states that the miners had had a meeting "respecting some bad customs amongst themselves", (probably the extent of under-cutting at settings). The captain at Boswidden had boasted that he would 'crush' them, and the miners judged by his reserve prices at the subsequent setting that he was implementing his boast. (18)

Six years later, St. Just was to experience another strike. Once again because the men thought that an increase in tin prices was not being passed on to them. Their demands for an increase were refused at Balleswidden mine and the men struck. (19) The strike lasted only a week when the mine gave way and the men returned to work. (20)

These two examples are not intended to disprove the view that the tribute system was an effective preventer of strikes. Indeed the writer is aware of only seven strikes in the industry from 1793 to 1859, none of which was long lasting, and two of which were concerned with hours of work and not

wages. The two examples are intended to show that there were points of conflict in the working of the system which could lead to strike action, although it was only in exceptional circumstances that they did.

In 1793, "some hundreds" of miners in the Redruth district refused to go underground, "for no other reason than because the standard for copper was not higher." (21) The men's wages were, of course, directly dependant on the standard, or price of fine copper, and so low was the standard in that year, that the adventurers decided to assess a fixed standard for the purposes of settling wages. In effect this amounted to a temporary guarantee of a minimum wage. The men believed that they were being cheated by the arrangement, and insisted on having their ores assessed at the prevailing price for which the ores were actually sold. Since this could not be speedily complied with, the tributers struck work, pulled up the ladders so that no underground work could be performed, and remained on strike for about three weeks before they eventually won their point. (22)

In February 1831, the miners at Fowey Consols and Lanescot formed a combination in an attempt to raise tribute rates. They thought to hand out rough justice to two men who refused to join the combination. The two were besieged in the counting house of the mine by a crowd of angry miners, who refused to disperse on the reading of the Riot Act. Seven were arrested and conveyed to Bodmin gaol, but only after their colleagues had made a determined attempt to rescue them. On the following day, the miners assembled with the intention of releasing their comrades. Special constables had to be sworn in and the militia summoned before they could be induced to return after each had been given a penny loaf and a pint of beer. (23) These mines being owned by a single entrepreneur may have had something to do with the precocious (by Cornish standards) development of antagonism.

Strikes were exceptional and when they did occur were of short duration and not really marked by violence and class hatred. There was no effective trade unionism, only occasional, spontaneous combination.

By the eighteen-forties, the Cornish miners, could not have been totally unaware of the very different situation prevailing in the northern coalfields. In 1844 agents of the Miners Association were sent into the county to dissuade the Cornish from going north to Durham as blacklegs. They held regular meetings in the mining districts and reported a good response. The Cornishmen were being offered £3 10s. a month with a free house and garden, but when they heard the case of the colliers, "they say that if the masters would give them six pounds a month, they would not go." (24) Many did go, (25) but the miners' representatives were certainly successful in turning back many more who might otherwise have done so. (26)

There was a noticeable absence of conflict between employers and labourers in the Cornish mines. For this absence the tribute system may have been to a considerable degree responsible. This is not the same thing as saying that it was wholly responsible, or even nearly so. No more is it the same thing as saying that it was a system which operated in the interests of the men, nor that its introduction into other mining areas would have necessarily lessened the incidence of industrial conflict.*

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*One source of conflict in many areas, the truck system, was not so much in evidence in the Cornish mines. The West Briton claimed in 1818 that the practice had long prevailed in many mines of compelling the miners to purchase their necessaries at particular shops, the cost of which was deducted from their pay. (19th June 1818) But as a writer pointed out in the same paper in 1834, the extent of the system was limited in Cornwall by the short contract periods which bound the miner:

> "If an agent whether by gentle hint, or a stern command, directs his men to purchase their commodities where he pleases, he will generally find that men will not flock in any very great numbers to his settings."
> (West Briton 19th Sept. 1834)

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(12) See West Briton 25th March, 15th April and 22nd April 1859
(13) Penny Magazine 27th Dec. 1834 p. 501
(14) idem. but see also J. Taylor, 'On the Economy of the Mines of Cornwall and Devon', Transactions of the Geological Society 12 (1814) p. 319
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(16) ibid. 15th April 1853
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(21) Jenkin Mss. Jenkin to George Hunt, 14th August 1793
(22) ibid. above to Richard Phillips, 2nd Sept. 1793
(23) Annual Register 1831 Chronicle p. 39
(24) Northern Star 8th June 1844 p. 5 clm. 4
(25) See R. Fynes, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham (Sunderland (1873)) p. 91 and E. Welbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge 1923) p. 74
(26) Northern Star 17th and 31st August and 14th Sept. 1844

Other Factors Influencing the Degree of Militancy

It has been stated above that the nature of Cornish industrial and social structure, with the absence of a 'boss class' in face to face contact with the working miners, may have slowed down the development of class-conscious militancy, and that in part this was a product of the system, and in part a product of the financial organisation of the industry. Dr. Barham remarked in 1842 on the independent character of the miner, which he describes as 'something American':

> "The mine adventurers, the real employers, are not brought into contact in any way as masters with the working miners; so that the agents, men taken for the most part from their own ranks, are the only superiors, with whom they have to do."

He thought that the tributer was able to entertain the hope that some fortunate contracts would, "put him on a parity as to station, with the wealthier individuals near him, who have for the most part, at no remote period, occupied some of the lowest steps on the ladder on which he himself stands." (1)

When H.S. Tremenheere described the Cornish miners as possessing, "two of the greatest boons that can fall to the lot of a labouring community — leisure and hope", he meant by the latter, the prospect of social advancement:

> "They see around them numerous examples of individuals from their own ranks in every stage of progress towards independence and well being; many possessing cottages and land, many placed in honourable and responsible situations in the mines, many who have risen to still higher points of social elevation." (2)

The ladder of promotion in the mines was not closed to the skilled and responsible miner, and the nature of the tribute system offered the hope of a material basis for social advancement. Had not the grandfather of the county M.P. Sir William Lemon, been a working miner? Such a rise would be exceptional indeed, but more modest levels of comfort and status might not seem so far away.

In the absence of a class comparable to the factory owner, the greatest share of influence in the mining districts, was wielded, not by the

adventurers, the capitalists proper, but by the lords.* These men were tied to the working class by the paternalist strings of patronage and deference. Relying on the social cement of charity, and identifying the miners with their families and names, through acts of ceremony, their relationship with the miners was based on a much more intricate network of relationships than the straight forward cash nexus.

Paid under the tribute system, and not seeing a class of employers opposed to their interests, the miners continued to see the profiteering middle-man, or grain hoarding farmer as the enemy in times of high prices, and expressed their discontent in the traditional and functional form of the food riot down to 1847. Abraham Duncan, the Chartist Missionary, had an account of a food riot related to him at Penzance in 1839, but failed to put the right interpretation on it:

> "the men of Cornwall relied now as they ever had done more upon physical than moral force." (3)

But food rioting showed the miners' conservatism in forms of protest action, rather than their potential for radicalism.

One area in which the miners were far from independent, was that of social security. Sickness benefit and accident relief were the responsibility of the Mine Club. Contributions to this fund were compulsary and deducted from wages, yet the fund was administered by the management, and in the event of a mine failure, was treated as a capital asset of the mine i.e. it was not returnable to the men. This was justified on the grounds that in many cases mines paid out sums much in excess of the contributed funds, but it was a justification which was one sided in the extreme. The Cornish miners did not have the experience of the independent benefit society to act as a nucleus for subsequent trade union development. The organisation of the Mine Club

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*The place of the lords in the social structure of the mining regions has been discussed in the chapter 'The Mining Community in its Geographical and Social Setting'. (Above p. 194 et seq.)

brought forth some correspondence in the columns of the West Briton in 1853. A letter from the miners of St. Just claimed, "We never see a balance sheet, nor debit and credit account", and continued to say that if the management would hand over control of the fund to the men the club would become, "one of the most noble of benevolent institutions, whereas under the present system in many instances it is worse than parochial aid." (4) A letter from Gwennap in the following month complained that although the men paid for the retaining of the mine doctor, they were not able to have one of their own choice. (5)

A Quarterly Reviewer in 1857 found it surprising that such a 'hot blooded' people should be "comparatively indifferent to political agitation." Notwithstanding the habits of combined action of the labouring miners in many respects, they had taken but little share in the political movement of recent years:

> "Leagues and unions, and Chartist gatherings have had small attraction for them, nor has any merely political cause found numerous and sanguine adherents in Cornwall."

Much of the explanation, the writer thought, lay in the county's geographical position which almost cut off the "contagion of foreign zeal." (6) The county's isolation from other industrial and mining centres, their ignorance of the realities of industrial conflict in other mining districts, may have had a good deal to do with the recruitment of Cornish miners as blacklegs in several nineteenth century mining disputes.

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(3) Northern Star 13th April 1839
(4) West Briton 26th Aug. 1853
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(6) Quarterly Review 1857 p. 312

Post-script: The Collapse of 1866 and the Attempt at Union

In its long history Cornish mining lived through depressions of varying degrees of severity. It survived the period of intense competition with Angelsey, and some through temporary slumps when wars closed foreign markets. It came quickly through the depression which accompanied the food scarcity period of 1847-48 to achieve its maximum copper output figures in 1856. (1) But deeper, long-run factors which were to end for all time the great period of Cornish copper mining, were by that date only just short of culmination.

As early as 1849, a writer was fearing that the county of Cornwall has, "seen her best days", because the "great and increasing influx of copper ore from Australia, Cuba, Chili (sic) etc. etc., must, at no distant period, be exceedingly injurious to the Cornish miners." (2) It was against this background that a financial crisis in 1866 precipitated the collapse of the Cornish Copper mining industry. Such was the rate of industrial contraction that it was estimated that the number thrown out of work in the mining districts of Cornwall and West Devon in the eighteen months ending in December 1867 was 11,400.* (3)

Distress was widespread at Redruth in 1867 it was discovered that in some parts of the town, men, women and children were living in a state of nakedness without food, fire, or the shelter, "we should afford to a dog." (4)

It was in these unfavourable circumstances, that the miners of east Cornwall and their fellow workers just over the border in Devon, made their first serious attempt at forming a trade union in defence of their interests. In February 1866 the Miners' Mutual Benefit Association was formed, but some of the articles of its proposed code proved that the Cornwall Gazette was right in seeing that this benefit society was a trade union. (5) These were

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*The rise of Devon Great Consols was a feature of the mid-nineteenth century. It had made its first sales in 1844, and after 1850 easily led the other mines in output. It was classed as a Cornish mine, although just over the border, because it sold its ores at the Cornish ore sales known as 'ticketings'.

the important clauses:

> "In every mine where there are fifty men working, there shall be a committee formed of nine men, to be chosen by a majority, to whom miners shall go when they deem the price offered by the mine agent for doing certain work insufficient, and the committee shall visit the place in dispute and decide whether the price offered is sufficient or not, and if it is the men must bear their own responsibility, but if not, the committee shall consult the agents and ask them to advance, and in case of the agents refusing to do this at the expiration of a fortnight, such committee shall correspond with the General Secretary who shall call a delegate meeting to decide what steps shall be taken.
>
> If there be a suspension of labour in any mine under the authority of the delegate meeting, the members of the association belonging to that mine shall received 12s per week, and 1s per week for each child under 12 years of age.
>
> If any member be known to take any pitch or bargain belonging to other members, he shall be excluded from the association, and forfeit all his claims and rights." (6)

The agents agreed not to employ any miner connected with the Association, and by the end of February, the miners at East Caradon, Marke Valley, and Drake Walls were on strike. (7)

In the last week of February and the first week of March the disyute warmed up. At Drake Walls a strike breaker was seized and ridden on the pole by eight miners, and threatening letters were being received by mine agents. Captain J. Richards received the following letter dated 29th February 1866:

> "You will please pardon me for sending you this epistle. Thair is a great disturbance in this neighbourhood. I never new of a period in which miners were so determined so excited as they are now, and if they can't attain the object they have in view in a little time, I believe something of a very serious kind will soon take place. I have been in company with miners, and on their occasions I have stood off and heard their consoltations saying what they will do. Thair are a number of men who would as soon take the life of a man, as they would take the life of a bird. You your Brother and Captain Climo are in great danger, I know it for a fact. Be on your guard, keep yourselves as safe as

> you can. God ford that this struggle should end in Death, and on less you yeald according to what I have heard their will be bloodshed And if on prepared state think about the matter. If each of you whare religious and God fearing men I would refrain from furnishing you with infirmation in reference to this moment and what as been said. A love for your Souls which will bask for ever in the Sun Beams of Heaven, or splash into the Pit of Perdition, as prompted me to duity —— Yours respectfully A Friend."

Richards was also the recipient of another letter:

> "Please to take notice that we have formed a union, but we hear that you, with the rest of the agents of mines, are about to put a stop to it by excludin the men, or rather by not setting to them at al, for as sure as you stoop the men you will be stoop, and that in a manner that you now think but little about, and espeticy your brother Isaac. So you better keep him home for a little wile, so please tell him off it. Now no more at present but look out for it."

At Kingston Mine a touch of grim humour was applied. A coffin shape was found traced on the ground and bearing the letters T.R. The captain's name was Tom Richards, but the men said that the shape represented a pasty, and the initials stood for one of their comrades Thomas Rowse, who was being ribbed for having brought an unusually large pasty to work that day.

Setting day at Devon Great Consols was approaching, and there were fears that "fabulous numbers of Cornish miners were intending to march to it, with the result that the magistrates attended with 131 specials and 150 soldiers. The expected invasion did not take place, and at the meeting Mr. W.A. Thomas, Chairman of the Board, addressed the men:

> "My boys, hark to me a minute. You don't all know me, but I dare say some do, for I have come down here for several years, and have been glad to see you all so happy and contented, living upon and enjoying your wages —— (hear, hear). You have I understand been deluded into joining a society, and if it be true that its rules are such as I will name, it is a society which no person in his senses as an employer of labour can for a moment agree to ..."

He continued to say that no one belonging to the Association would be able to take a pitch or bargain at the mine, and stated that if the adventurers agreed

to the miners' terms, "You would be the employers, and we your poor dupes." He then emphasised the weakness of the miners' position if they held out:

> "You will starve before you find other employ, and you will see your children distressed and crying for victuals."

If they continued to strike he would stop all the mines in which he had an interest and so throw more than 3,000 out of work. (8)

By the 15th March, work had resumed at Devon Great Consols and other mines in the Tavistock district, but in east Cornwall, at Liskeard and Callington, the miners were still holding out. At the last setting day at South Caradon after setting a pitch and withdrawing it after the takers stated their subscription to the rules of the Association, Captain Clymo asked the assembled miners how many more were members, every man raised his hand and shouted, "We are all society men to a man." (9)

This was an impressive show of solidarity, but it was too late. The Cornwell Gazette had pointed out in the strike's beginning that very many adventurers would be benefited rather than injured by strikes so rapidly were the mines losing money, many mines it suggested were only being kept going because the adventurers were unwilling to throw vast numbers of the poor out of employ. (10) By the end of the month the strike was over, and the paper was referring to the miners' "brief but hopeless struggle." (11)

The irony of 1866, was that in this strike for the first time, there were signs that the ideas and methods of the trade union movement were at long last infiltrating into the labour force, but it was too late for they coincided with the industry's collapse.

At a meeting of the miners a speaker recognised that Cornish miners were part of a larger, struggling working-class, when he said that a letter had been sent to the head of the Trades Union in London asking advice. The miners worked out tactics with which to counter the expected moves of the employers. If they persisted in a 'lock out', then all the men would remove to another place and deliberately burden the rate-payers by leaving their

families on the parish, and if there was any attempt to introduce blacklegs from the western part of the county, they would stop the pumps and flood the mines. (12) Now even Methodism was changing in its impact on labour attitudes, and miners were beginning to justify industrial conflict in religious terms. A meeting of the miners on Caradon Hill was attended by 2,000 miners and the proceedings were opened by the singing of a hymn, followed by a prayer, and the Cornwall Gazette referred to the "semi-religious canting tone adopted by the leaders of the strike movement." (13) A speaker at a mass meeting told the men that they were fighting for their liberty, and they believed that their liberty was inherited from a higher power, and inasmuch as the Almighty hated anything like oppression they were determined, by his Help, to put it down. (14)

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(6) ibid. 1st March and 8th March 1866
(7) ibid. 1st March 1866
(8) ibid. 8th March 1866
(9) ibid. 15th March 1866
(10) ibid. 1st March 1866
(11) ibid. 29th March 1966
(12) All these tactics were discussed at a Mass meeting reported in Cornwall Gazette 15th March 1866
(13) ibid. 8th March 1866
(14) ibid. 15th March 1866

Conclusion

> "These are a people the civil power are scarcely answerable for, at least for their good manners, as they live out of the districts of human society, and may be said to be no visible inhabitants of the earth, though they act in the world." (1)

In these terms were the miners of the eighteenth century described; yet just over a hundred years later they were being portrayed in a leading national periodical in very different colours:

> "A century ago the inhabitants of the county were, as a people, very careless of religion, if not irreligious; they are now notorious for the prevalence of devotional feeling, but with a strong tendency to the enthusiastic. They were all but universally addicted to drunkenness; intemperance is now exception among them. They were pugnacious and turbulent; they are now orderly and peaceful, notwithstanding their habits of association in great numbers, in a degree surpassed by no civilised community. They were wreckers and smugglers; wrecking has not only ceased, but they are distinguished for their humanity and courage on the occasions of the many shipping disasters along their coasts; and smuggling (though probably from other than moral causes) is comparatively a trifling evil." (2)

This study has been concerned with the period over which this transformation has been claimed to have taken place. In just over a century, the rhythm of labour was hastened and routinised, the scale of enterprise extended, new settlements grew up and the population of old ones increased at an unprecedented rate; a new religious movement has grown from its very origins to become the most influential cultural factor in the region, the recreational pattern was transformed, and the economic balance between industry and agriculture moved strongly towards the former.

Yet these changes were accompanied by few signs of the emergence of the patterns of industrial conflict and political militancy elsewhere associated with periods of rapid industrialisation. The miners may well have been one of the best ordered of Victorian labour forces, but they retained much that was traditional in their chosen forms of action. Protest continued to find expression in the direct form of the riot. Methodist quietism and

organizational opposition, the tribute system, the peculiar financial organisation of the industry, the social structure of the region, combined to produce an atmosphere in which it was difficult for militancy to breathe. The absence of conflict should not be taken as implying the absence of social change. The life of the labouring miner in the mid-nineteenth century was substantially different from his predecessor the early eighteenth century, although the strength of custom and the resiliance of tradition tend to blur the sharp edges of transformation.

The collapse of the copper mining industry was not the end of the Cornish miner, for in the sixties the great emigration of miners to the metal mining districts of the world really began to gain momentum. Migration had always been a feature of Cornish mining. The well known skill of the Cornishmen had led to their being attracted overseas from at least the early years of the nineteenth century, (3) and many more had been driven by hard times at home as in 1848, when the Guardians of the Penzance Union were attempting to borrow money to pay the passages of a great many miners to Australia.* (4)

It was during the depression of the late forties that Wilkie Collins visited the county and reported:

> "For the last three years, emigration has been more largely resorted to in that county, than perhaps in any other in England. Out of the population of the Penzance Union alone, nearly five per cent. left their native land for Australia, or New Zealand in 1849."**(5)

Although it is true, as a recent writer has pointed out, (6) that emigration

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*It was reported in 1847 that upwards of 700 persons, men, women, and children, left Camborne in ten days for Australia or North America. (Cornwall Gazette 26th Feb. 1847).

**There is a growing literature on Cornish emigration. Among recent works there is A.C. Todd, The Cornish Miner in America (Truro 1966), D.B. Barton, 'Cornishmen and Australian Copper' in his Essays in Cornish Mining History (Truro 1968) 67-92, R. Duncan, 'Case Studies in Emigration: Cornwall, Gloucestershire and New South Wales, 1877-1886', Economic History Review Vol. 18 (1965-66) 272-289. An interesting study of an aspect of Cornish community life overseas is J. Rowe, Cornish Methodists and Emigrants (Cornish Methodist Historical Association Occasional Publication No. 11) (1967).

was in full swing before 1840, it was 'pull' motivated emigration, or else peaks associated with depressions such as that of the late 'forties exampled above, 'push' factors began to operate with real force during the collapse of the 'sixties. The movement continued as a tin collapse followed that of copper. Between 1873-74 and 1878-79 prices and employment halved, and after a far from compensatory recovery 1880-82, fell again, although less abruptly, during the years 1883-84. (7) During the decade 1871-80, the population of 23 Cornish mining sub-districts declined 13%, compared with a fall of 3.2% in the non-mining districts. It was in these years that 'Cousin Jacks', as they became known, carried the methods of Cornish mining, and the customs and practices of the Cornish mining communities to the mining districts of the world.

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(4) C.R.O. Hawkins Collection, DDJ 1227 Trethewey Letterbook 10th March 1848
(5) W. Collins, Pambles Beyond Railways (2nd ed. 1852) p. 80
(6) D.B. Barton, Essays in Cornish Mining History (Truro 1968) p. 67
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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Further examples of tribute and tutwork pay from the Report of the Royal Commission on Child Employment (P.P. (1842) xvi p. 748)

Dolcoath Tribute Pay 17th April 1841

William Rule - Two men and two boys.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Amount £60 3s. at 13s. 4d.							40	2	0
Mixing and Dividing	0	5	1						
Grinding	0	5	10						
Box and drawing	1	6	10						
Smith's cost	1	13	11						
Candles and Materials	3	9	7						
Powder	1	6	10	£8	8	1			
Subsist				10	6	0			
Doctor					1	6			
							18	15	7
							21	13	5
Club								13	2
For January and February, 1841.							£20	13	3

Dolcoath Tutwork Pay 17th April 1841

James Richards and Partners - Six men

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Driving 2 fathoms at £10							20	0	0
Driving 1 fathom at £ 8 10s.							8	10	0
							28	10	0
Box and drawing	0	12	6						
Smith's cost	2	1	4						
Candles and Materials	3	16	5						
Powder	1	17	11	£8	8	2			
Subsist				0	0	0			
Doctor					1	9			
							8	9	11
							20	0	1
Club								10	0
For March 1841.							£19	10	1

Appendix 2

The following account for a tribute pare at Fowey Consols for December 1841, indicates the variety of reasons for which deductions could be made from wages. This is a somewhat exceptional account in that most often a comprehensive term such as 'tools', 'supplies' or 'materials' would be used. Many of the charges it will be observed did not apply to this particular pare at this particular time.

William Collum and Co.

Tons	Cwts.	Qrs.	£	s.	d.		Amount	Increase
3	3	0	at 4	17	6	per ton	£15 6s. 5d.	£0 5s. 5d.

Real amount £15 11s. 10d. at 15s. from 20s. - £11 13s. 10d.

Cash	£7	0s.	0d.
Smith's costs		1s.	1d.
Dressing costs		5s.	0d.
Club: 3s. Doctor: 1s.		4s.	0d.
10 lbs. candles		6s.	8d.
10 lbs. powder		0s.	0d.
Hilts			
Shovels			
Shovel hilts			
lbs. hoop iron			
Barrow			
Barrel		10s.	6d.
Sieve and handles			
Riddle and handles			
lbs. tallow			
Copper nails			
Brooms			
Washing tub			2d.
Powder cans			
Kibble and ropes			
coils sump rods			
Slings			
Carriage			
Railing			
lbs. nails			
Oil			
24 feet safety rod		1s.	0d.
Tar			
Paper			
Grinding, Drawing, Dividing, Assaying — at 6s. 8d. a ton	£1	0s.	11d.
Subsist			
		-	£9 10s. 1d.
			£2 3s. 9d.

(Royal Commission on Child Employment (PP. 1842) p. 750)

Appendix 3

Examples of pares expenditure on candles and gunpowder February 1822

(taken from Wheal Treasure Smith Cost Book. Mss. C.R.O.)

No. in pare	Candles	Powder
4	£1 10s. 10d.	£1 3s. 0d.
4	£1 12s. 6d.	16s. 0d.
8	£2 15s. 0d.	£2 10s. 0d.
1	10s. 10d.	-
1	11s. 8d.	-
2	17s. 6d.	7s. 0d.
2	12s. 6d.	3s. 0d.

Appendix 4

2 & 3 Victoria Cap. LVIII

'And for the Prosecution and Punishment of Frauds in Mines by idle and dishonest Workmen removing or concealing ore for the purpose of obtaining more wages than are of right due to them, and thereby defrauding the Adventurers in or Proprietors of such mines, or the honest and industrious Workmen therein, be it enacted, That if any Person or Persons employed in or about any mine within the County of Cornwall shall take, remove or conceal the ore of any metal, or any Lapis Calaminaris, Manganese Mundick or other Mineral found or being in any such mine, with Intent to defraud the Proprietors of or Adventurers in any such mine, or any one or more of them respectively, or any Workman or Miner employed therein, then and on every such case respectively such Person or Persons so offending shall be deemed and taken to be guilty of Felony, and being convicted thereof shall be liable to be punished in the same manner as in the case of Simple Larceny.'

(Statutes at Large)

Appendix 5

The Stannary Court

The student of Cornish mining history must sooner or later come across mention of the Stannary Courts. These ancient courts had jurisdiction over a wide range of matters relating to tin mining. They have scarcely been mentioned in this study, since they dealt with matters of little relevance to the life of the labouring miner. Further, it was not until 1836 (6 & 7 William IV Cap. 106) that metal mines other than tin mines were brought within the competence of the court. Until that date the much more important copper mining industry, employing a very significant majority of the miners, was beyond the limits of the court's jurisdiction.

With various amendments (e.g. Stannaries Act 1869), the court remained in existence to 1894, but its concern was with suits among lords, adventurers, and mine suppliers rather than with matters of concern to the mine labourer. There were exceptions, for example the case mentioned above (p. 60) in 1838, when a tribute pare sued for payment of wages due which they claimed had been wrongly withheld when they had been falsely accused of fraudulent working, but such cases are exceptional. The Stannaries Act of 1869, (32 & 33 Victoria Cap. 19) was of some importance in that it legislated that in the event of a mine closure, wages due to the working miners were to have priority over all other debts.

The Stannary Parliament met for the last time in 1750-51. Dr. Rowe has described its legislative concern as being designed, "to promote the interests of the adventurer class of landlords, small capitalists, local merchants, and so forth; it cared little for the interests of the labouring miner." (Rowe, opp. cit. p. 47). The same can be said of the concern of the Stannary Court. It existed to resolve the disputes of owners and investors, and only incidentally touched the life of the working miner.

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